MICHAEL DUMMETT'S LOGICAL BASIS OF METAPHYSICS

by

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Thesis Abstract

Thesis Title: Michael Dummett's Logical Basis of Metaphysics

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In this dissertation I argue that there are three major problems with Dummett's theory of meaning for natural language. The first problem is epistemological. Dummett invokes the concept of implicit knowledge to explain how we are able to learn and master the language that we speak. Dummett argues that the only way to avoid the negative semantic implications of Wittgenstein's say/show distinction is to explain how we are able to grasp sense. Grasping sense depends upon our implicit knowledge of the meaning of our language. Dummett's argument for avoiding Wittgenstein's say/show distinction is in the form of a disjunctive syllogism: either a theory of meaning can obtain as a theory of understanding, or a theory of sense is mute. That there are problems with the first disjunct suggests that we can infer the second and conclude that Wittgenstein is right: a theory of sense is mute.

The second problem is contextual. The best way to interpret Dummett's philosophy of language is within the context of what Kripke describes as a tension between two tendencies: a tension between our scientific and non-scientific tendencies. The first tendency influences Dummett to conceive of philosophy as (1) a sector in the quest for the truth, and (2) as providing explanations for baffling problems. The second tendency influences Dummett to put a constraint upon the first tendency. Wittgenstein's later philosophy functions, for Dummett, as a reminder that such scientific theorizing about language cannot be produced apart from how language is used. What is problematic about this tension is that it influences Dummett to posit the problematic concept of implicit knowledge.

The third problem is interpretative. Dummett's problematic theory of meaning for language is, in the end, a *reductio ad absurdum* of his interpretation of Wittgenstein as a full-blooded conventionalist. Through a discussion of Wittgenstein's particular brand of conventionalism, as well as his own contribution to the foundations dispute in the philosophy of mathematics, I argue that Dummett's reading of Wittgenstein is incorrect. The success of Dummett's worthwhile contribution to analytical philosophy depends upon adequately addressing these three problems.

To Mary Louise,

my very own necessary and sufficient condition.

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Introduction

In the preface to *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* Michael Dummett says that "we all stand, or should stand, in the shadow of Wittgenstein, in the same way that much earlier generations once stood in the shadow of Kant."[1] In fact one of Dummett's complaints about many contemporary American philosophers "is that they appear never to have read Wittgenstein."[2] In contrast to this, the careful reader will find the influence of Wittgenstein in practically every part of Dummett's philosophy: in his work toward a theory of meaning, in his metaphysics, and in his understanding of Frege. The Frege that we find in Dummett's writings has not only "learned all there is to learn from Quine, [but] has [also] mastered much of what can be gleaned from Wittgenstein."[3] While Quine's influence has an important place in Dummett's philosophy,[4] it is the influence of Wittgenstein which has the greater significance:

> No doubt also the way I have come to understand Frege has been strongly influenced by a philosophical background in which Wittgenstein has been that figure of the modern era overshadowing all others. Whether this is harmful for the interpretation of Frege depends on whether Wittgenstein understood Frege correctly or incorrectly. It seems, on general grounds, overwhelmingly probable that he understood him aright; but, again, it is unlikely that Wittgenstein himself has been well enough understood, or his influence sufficiently widespread, among those who have written about Frege, for that influence to have created an 'orthodox' or 'standard' interpretation.[5]

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[1] Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* · (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,1991), p. xi.

[2] Ibid., p.xi.

[3] Ian Hacking, *Why Does Language Matter To Philosophy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 180.

[4] "In *FPL*, I maintained that a theory of meaning is a theory of understanding. This thesis is in line with the views of the later Wittgenstein, but the train of thought that led me to it was prompted by reading Quine." Michael Dummett, *The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981b), p. 74.

[5] Ibid., pp.xv-xvi.

It might be true, as Dummett implies, that among Frege scholars, Wittgenstein's influence has not been well enough understood for there to be a standard interpretation of him. Nevertheless, to understand Dummett's conception of philosophy and how his own philosophy of language fits into this conception, it is important to clarify how he understands the influence of Wittgenstein.

It is difficult to clarify the nature of Wittgenstein's influence on Dummett. For example, Dummett's approach to philosohical problems has been to show that a theory of meaning underlies metaphysics. This is, as he says, his own "worthwhile contribution to philosophy."[6] He goes on:

> I am maintaining that we have now reached a position where the search for such a theory of meaning can take on a genuinely scientific character; this means, in particular, that it can be carried on in such a way, not, indeed, that disputes do not arise, but that they can be resolved to the satisfaction of everyone, and, above all, that we may hope to bring the search within a finite time to a successful conclusion. The history of the subject indeed makes it very tempting to adopt the frequently expressed view that there are never any agreed final conclusions in philosophy; but, few as they may be, there exist counter-examples to this thesis, examples, that is, of solutions to what were once baffling problems that have now been accepted as part of the established stock of knowledge.[7]

Dummett indicates that one interesting counterexample to this thesis is "Frege's resolution, by means of the quantifier-variable notation, of the logic of generality."[8] This example is important for Dummett because it indicates the kind of "genuinely scientific character" that other solutions in philosophy ought to have once an agreed upon theory of meaning is established. This does not mean that Dummett regards philosophy as part of the natural sciences. What this does mean is that Dummett thinks philosophy is to take on a genuinely scientific character insofar as, like the

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[6] Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.xl.
[7] Ibid., pp.454-55.
[8] Ibid., p.455.

natural sciences, it provides explanations for "baffling problems." So understood, philosophy is, as Dummett puts it, one "sector in the quest for truth."

Dummett does not deny that this conception of philosophy is "un-Wittgensteinian."[9] What Dummett does deny is the legitimacy of Wittgenstein's fundamental belief that "philosophy, as such, must never criticise but only describe."[10] If Dummett's worthwhile contribution to analytical philosophy is so un-Wittgensteinian, in what sense can Wittgenstein be said to influence Dummett? The answer to this question can be found, in part, by briefly considering Dummett's interpretation of his two main philosophical luminaries, Frege and Wittgenstein. This consideration sets the stage for indicating the nature and the difficulty of Dummett's systematic conception of philosophy and how his philosophy of language fits into this conception.

1. Frege

The task of constructing a theory of meaning for natural language has ample precedent. Dummett argues that the seeds of this idea took root at the very beginning of the analytical tradition in the philosophy of Frege. This is why Frege plays such an essential role in Dummett's philosophy. This is also why Dummett believes that Frege has a central place not only within analytical philosophy, but within the entire history of Western philosophy as well.

Why should Frege be thought of as a philosopher comparable in achievement to Aristotle or Kant? Dummett's answer turns on the idea that Frege's work brought about "an altered conception of the starting point of philosophy and of the relations of dependence between the different parts of the subject."[11] There must be something right about this. Frege's *Begriffsschrift* , for example, provided a

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[9] Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.xi.
[10] Ibid., p.xi.
[11] Michael Dummett, *The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981b), p.56.

scientistic grid for Russell and the Logical Positivists; Frege's logicist program has an important place, both historically and conceptually, within contemporary philosophy of mathematics;[12] and Frege's method, in *Grundlagen* , of defining the concept of number provides us with a paradigm of philosophical analysis that extends beyond the initial scope of Frege's philosophical concerns.

In ignoring the Cartesian tradition, so preoccupied with epistemology, Frege was able to make the question of meaning the most important task in philosophy, providing what Dummett sees as the foundation for the rest of the subject. For Dummett this foundation is not epistemological, but methodological. Indeed the underlying importance of the analysis of meanings would not, in itself, contradict the Cartesian idea that epistemology is the foundation of philosophy. Rather, the analysis of meanings would be the way philosophical inquires should be conducted (including epistemological ones).[13]

The initial implausibility of the claim that 'the question of meaning is the most important task in philosophy' becomes more reasonable, Dummett tells us, when we remind ourselves that the subject of logic is as old as philosophy itself. And yet logic came of age only with the publication of Frege's *Begriffsschrift* . It is but a small step to then argue that the same can be said of philosophy proper:

> Only with Frege was the proper object of philosophy finally established: namely, first, that the goal of philosophy is the analysis of the structure of thought; secondly, that the study of thought is to be sharply distinguished from the study of the psychological process of thinking; and finally, that the only proper method for analysing thought consists in the analysis of language.[14]

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[12] Not only does Frege inaugurate what Dummett calls "the modern era in the philosophy of mathematics", but his conception of number as expounded in *Grundlagen* has had a significant influence on contemporary attempts of clarifying and defending number-theoretic logicism. A good example of Frege's influence here can be seen in Crispin Wright's *Frege's Conception of Numbers as Objects* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1983). See also William Demopoulos (ed), *Frege's Philosophy of Mathematics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[13] Cf., Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* Second Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981a), p.667.

[14] Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 458.

While "the only proper method for analysing thought consists in the analysis of language" can be said to be the fundamental tenet of analytic philosophy, it is improper to impose this, without modification, on Frege. For Frege, thinking has deep ontological significance. 'Thoughts', for Frege, are independent of us, and are given to us through the often distorting medium of language. This is why Frege's attempt to create a formalized concept script is significant: through the use of a linguistic medium that does not share the defects of natural language we will be able to grasp these 'thoughts' more clearly. In turn, we shall have at our disposal a powerful conceptual tool that can be used to clarify, and eventually explain, baffling problems in the mathematical and natural sciences. It is in this sense that Frege equated the philosophy of thought with the philosophy of language.

Dummett is not unaware of the difference between Frege and his successors on this point. Dummett says that "[a]n explicit adherence to the fundamental tenet of analytical philosophy...cannot be claimed for Frege; but what can be claimed is that his philosophy of thought and language leads almost inexorably in that direction."[15] In this sense, Frege can be said to influence Dummett's conception of philosophy as one "sector in the quest for the truth." By focusing our attention on the proper object of philosophy, we will be able, eventually, to provide explanations for "baffling problems" that extend beyond the mathematical and natural sciences. However, it is important to note that Dummett's awareness of the difference here between Frege and his successors is directly connected with his understanding of the influence of Wittgenstein on modern analytical philosophy.

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[15] Michael Dummett, *The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981b), p.54.

2. Wittgenstein

Dummett's attempt at making sense of Wittgenstein's philosophical influence made its first public appearance in his 1959 review of Wittgenstein's *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* .[16] Dummett argued that the purpose of the *Remarks* was to contribute toward the resolution of the "foundations crisis" within the philosophy of mathematics. Wittgenstein intended to solve the philosophical problem of deciding which of the differing schools in the philosophy of mathematics (platonism and the various forms of constructivism) is correct.[17] Wittgenstein's own contribution to the resolution of this problem is his own form of constructivism, what Dummett calls a "full-blooded conventionalism": "the logical necessity of any statement is always the *direct* expression of a linguistic convention. That a given statement is necessary consists always in our having expressly decided to treat that very statement as unassailable; it cannot rest on our having adopted certain other conventions which are found to involve our treating it so."[18] The implications of this position are, as Dummett admits, difficult to accept:

> Hence at every step we are free to choose to accept or reject the proof; there is nothing in our formulation of the axioms and of the rules of inference, and nothing in our minds when we accepted these before the proof was given, which of itself shows whether we shall accept the proof or not; and hence there is nothing which *forces* us to accept the proof. If we accept the proof, we confer necessity on the theorem proved; we 'put it in the archives' and will count nothing as telling against it. In doing this we are making a new decision, and not merely making explicit a decision we had already made implicitly.[19]

Part of what makes this view difficult to accept is its extreme sceptical implications. According to Dummett, to assert, with Wittgenstein, that one has the right to lay down that the assertion of a statement of a certain form is to be regarded

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[16] Cf., Michael Dummett, 'Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Mathematics' in *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp.166-85.
[17] Cf., Ibid., p.167.
[18] Ibid., p.170.
[19] Ibid., p.171.

as always justified, without any regard to the use that has already been given to the words that make up the statement, is to be drawn to the sceptical conclusion that "communication would be in constant danger of simply breaking down."[20] The danger here consists in not grounding communication on the past usage of the statements we assert. If we hold that anybody is entitled to lay down, by personal fiat, that a certain form of statement is logically true, then it will become impossible to give a uniform account of the use of our language at all.

In contrast to this, Dummett thinks that "the senses of the words in a statement may have already been fully determined, so that there is no room for any further determination."[21] In other words, it is not "up to us to decide to regard any statement we happen to pick on as holding necessarily, if we choose to do so."[22] Rather, it is the established sense of the words, together with the established rules of inference, that dictate to us what we can, and cannot, regard as a proof.

If Wittgenstein's description of what makes a mathematical statement necessary leads to the conclusion that "communication is in constant danger of simply breaking down," then it is correct to infer that this position of Wittgenstein's is a *reductio ad absurdum* of his philosophy as presented in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* . It is on the basis of this understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy that Dummett can make the following claim:

> Some things in [Wittgenstein's] philosophy...I cannot see any reason for accepting: and one is the belief that philosophy, as such, must never criticise but only describe. This belief was fundamental in the sense that it determined the whole manner in which, in his later writings, he discussed philosophical problems; not sharing it, I could not respect his work as I do if I regarded his arguments and insights as depending on the truth of that belief.[23]

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[20] Ibid., p.177.
[21] Ibid., p.176.
[22] Ibid., p.176.
[23] Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.xi.

This remark clarifies the sense in which Dummett is influenced by Wittgenstein, despite the thoroughly un-Wittgensteinian character of his philosophy. Wittgenstein's insights (like the connection between meaning and use) do not depend, Dummett thinks, on the truth of the belief that philosophy is descriptive (especially if such a belief leads to such sceptical conclusions). One of the tasks, therefore, of a reader of Wittgenstein's philosophy is to "extract the gold"[24] from within it.

3. A Tension Between Two Tendencies

Despite the fact that Dummett's "full-blooded conventionalist" reading of Wittgenstein has undergone critical examination,[25] it has nevertheless been very influencial for subsequent Wittgenstein interpretation.[26] By far the most important author to continue the tradition of Dummett's "sceptical" interpretation of Wittgenstein is Saul Kripke, whose book *Wittgenstein: On Rules and Private Language* provides a definitive treatment of the major themes originally presented in Dummett's sceptical interpretation.[27]

It is helpful to mention Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein here since it articulates what can be characterised as a major tension that exists within contemporary analytical philosophy. This tension can be said to have an effect upon our approach to the fundamental tenet of analytical philosophy: the proper method for analysing thought consists in the analysis of language.

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[24] Michael Dummett, 'Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Mathematics' in *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.166.

[25] Cf., Barry Stroud, 'Wittgenstein and logical necessity' in *The Philosophical Review* Vol. no. 74, pp.504-518, 1965.

[26] Stuart Shanker says: "It is highly significant that Dummett phrases the matter in these terms [that in following Wittgenstein's conventionalism we are led to the conclusion that "communication would be in constant danger of simply breaking down"], for this is the fundamental theme of the 'sceptical' interpretation of Wittgenstein's remarks on rule-following which has proliferated in recent years. Indeed, it might very well be the case that Dummett's argument here was an influencial source of that interpretation"; *Wittgenstein and the Turning -Point in the Philosophy of Mathematics* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p.302. See also, Ibid., p.13.

[27] Cf., Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein: On Rules and Private Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982).

Near the end of a long paper on substitutional quantification Saul Kripke remarks on the advantages and limitations of formal theories of natural language:

> I have spoken of formal theories of natural language without really discussing my own attitudes. I find myself torn between two conflicting feelings - a 'Chomskyan' feeling that deep regularities in natural language must be discoverable by an appropriate combination of formal, empirical, and intuitive techniqures, and a contrary (late) 'Wittgensteinian' feeling that many of the 'deep structures', 'logical forms', 'underlying semantics' and 'ontological commitments', etc., which philosophers have claimed to discover by such techniques are *Luftgebaüde* . I don't know how to resolve the tension, but I have let the first tendency be taken for granted in this paper. Nevertheless, though to a considerable extent I can work with them and I certainly do not regard them as completely meaningless, I don't really think that such phrases as 'logical form' have been sufficiently well explained to be used uncritically in philosophical discussion.[28]

How do these remarks apply to the fundamental tenet of analytical philosophy? Following Kripke it can be said that analytical philosophers are caught within a tension between two tendencies over this fundamental tenet. We have a 'Chomskyan' tendency, appealing to our scientific side, which compels us to think there are deep syntactic and semantic structures within language that can be discovered through patient and detailed analysis. The fruits of this tendency were clearly manifested in Frege's *Begriffsschrift* which provided the initial vision and motivation for a number of analytical philosophers like Russell and Carnap. The goal was to produce what Blackburn has aptly described as a "Bauhaus of the mind": "the pure vision of a rationally planned new town for scientists and philosophers, with straight roads leading from one solid unornamented block of truth to another."[29]

We also have a tendency that appeals to our non-scientific side, a (late) 'Wittgensteinian' tendency, which suggests to us that despite all of the supposed systematic efforts at clarifying the logic of our language, concepts like 'logical form'

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[28] Saul Kripke, 'Is There a Problem about Substitutional Quantification?' in G. Evans, J. McDowell (eds), *Truth and Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p.412.

[29] Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1984), p.8.

are nothing but, as Wittgenstein would say, metaphysical shadows cast by the requirement of a particular grammar.[30]

While Dummett never makes explicit mention of this tension in his work, it is important to see that his own philosophy of language can, and should, be interpreted with this tension in mind.[31] This tension of Kripke's illumines the dynamics at work in Dummett's philosophy of language and how these determine his own systematic conception of philosophy and his own general form of a theory of meaning. In fact Dummett's theory of meaning represents one of the best examples of simultaneously trying to come to terms with the important characteristics of what Russell called 'the scientific method' in philosophy, while also trying to deal with the inherent limitations that this method embodies.[32]

4. Implicit Knowledge

Dummett's interpretation of Wittgenstein in his 1959 review of the *Remarks* is but one aspect of Dummett's relation to Wittgenstein. It is important to point out that Dummett's theory of meaning is not only offered as an alternative to Dummett's understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy as found in the *Remarks* , but is also designed to directly respond to one of its major consequences: that

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[30] "The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement. (For the crystaline purity of logic was, of course, not a *result of investigation* : it was a requirement.) The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming empty. - We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction* . Back to the rough ground!" Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell,1984), I:§107.

[31] The closest that Dummett gets to making mention of this is to be found in the following remarks concerning the difference between American and British approaches to analytical philosophy: "It would be ridiculous to address the question 'Can analytical philosophy be systematic?' to the author of *Der logische Aufbau der Welt* ; and, though few American philosophers have followed their mentor so closely as to produce such rivals to that work as Nelson Goodman's *Structure of Appearance* , most are unanimous in regarding philosophy, with Quine, as at least cognate with the natural sciences, as part of the same general enterprise as they. In those English philosophical circles dominated by the later Wittgenstein or by Austin, on the other hand, the answer given to this question ['Can analytical philosophy be systematic?'] was a resounding 'No': for them, the attempt to be systematic in philosophy was the primal error, founded upon a total misconception of the character of the subject". Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp.437-8.

[32] Cf., Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* (London: Unwin Books, 1963), pp.75-93.

philosophy must never criticise but only describe. Dummett argues that Wittgenstein's philosophy is not free from meaning-theoretic assumptions, and therefore not free from a methodological approach to philosophy. Dummett thinks that Wittgenstein's position on the nature of philosophy rests upon "a quite definite conception of what meaning consists in and, consequently, how it is to be characterised."[33] Since Wittgenstein himself employed a philosophical methodology which rests upon general ideas about meaning, only a theory of meaning in terms of those very ideas can determine whether Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy can be at all justified.[34]

What makes the success of Dummett's own theory of meaning important here concerns the significance of a distinction that lies at the heart of Wittgenstein's descriptive approach to philosophy (a distinction which, Dummett thinks, can stand on its own irrespective of its connection with Wittgenstein's philosophy). Within the context of showing how Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing provides a way to expound Frege's distinction between sense and reference without inconsistency, Dummett acknowledges that this distinction can rightly be interpreted as implying that a theory of sense is *mute* : sense only shows itself through our behaviour, it can never be stated in a theory. However, in following a lead from Quine[35] Dummett argues that "since while we cannot state the sense of an expression, we can state what it is to grasp that sense and attach it to that expression."[36]

It is for this reason that Dummett's theory of meaning is epistemological: a theory of meaning is a theory of understanding (how we grasp sense). This

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[33] Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.164.
[34] Cf., Ibid., p.166.
[35] Cf., Michael Dummett, *The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981b), p.74.
[36] Michael Dummett, 'Frege and Wittgenstein' in Irving Block (ed.), *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1981), p.32.

epistemological component of Dummett's theory of meaning shows up in his use of the concept of implicit knowledge. Dummett makes appeal to this concept in order to explain how it is that we can speak and understand language. The coherency of the concept of implicit knowledge, therefore, is crucial for the success of Dummett's theory of meaning and, in turn, for the success of Dummett's own systematic conception of philosophy.

This concept of implicit knowledge, however, is problematic as it stands. In fact, Dummett's own use of Frege and Wittgenstein contribute toward this situation and presents Dummett with an epistemology which is highly questionable. If Dummett is unable to overcome this questionable epistemology, then he will be faced with the inevitable consequence of Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing.

5. Dummett's Dilemma

This questionable epistemology is not the only problem that Dummett faces. A more fundamental problem concerns Dummett's own interpretation of "that figure of the modern era overshadowing all others."[37] The fact that Dummett is led, through his use of Frege and Wittgenstein, to introduce the problematic concept of implicit knowledge might in fact be a *reductio ad absurdum* of interpreting Wittgenstein as a full-blooded conventionalist.[38] Could Dummett's own reaction of feeling "simultaneously stimulated and frustrated"[39] by Wittgenstein's *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* be the result of misunderstanding Wittgenstein's very philosophical significance? This misunderstanding not only provides the basis for Dummett's sceptical interpretation of Wittgenstein, but also directs Dummett's

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[37] Michael Dummett, *The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981b), p.xv.

[38] A similar point could be made about Dummett's interpretation of Frege. The issues involved in this complex issue extend far beyond the present study. They are, though, worth serious consideration.

[39] Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.173.

appropriation of Wittgenstein's ideas. With this in mind it could be argued that what is troubling about Dummett's theory of meaning is that it does not consider Wittgenstein's philosophy as contributing toward the resolution of philosophical problems by dissolving the framework in which they arise (in this case Dummett's realist/anti-realist framework).

Dummett, more than any other contemporary analytical philosopher, takes issue with the scientific and non-scientific tendencies at work in the analytical tradition. He does this by his use of Frege and Wittgenstein. And yet his use of these two important figures in his work both leads to an epistemology which is highly questionable (implicit knowledge), and fails to offer us a way to overcome the tension created by these two tendencies. An important reason why Dummett is lead to this questionable epistemology, and is incapable of overcoming this tension is due, in part, to his sceptical reading of Wittgenstein. Once this reading is questioned the tension between the scientific and non-scientific tendencies can itself be resolved by dissolving the assumptions upon which it is based. This does not help Dummett's project, but it would indicate that the tension that informs Dummett's work might itself be based upon a conceptual confusion.

I shall argue here that the viability of Dummett's worthwhile contribution to analytical philosophy depends, in part, upon demonstrating that Dummett's sceptical interpretation of Wittgenstein is either correct, or that the non-sceptical interpretation of Wittgenstein is based upon ideas which lead to conceptual confusion. However, given this interpretive problem of Dummett's sceptical reading of Wittgenstein, as well as the epistemological problem of implicit knowledge and the conceptual problem of the tension between two tendencies, it is unclear whether Dummett's case for providing the *logical* basis for metaphysics is viable as it stands.

Chapter One
The Idea of a Theory of Meaning I: Davidson's Proposal

A theory of meaning conceived along Dummettian lines is committed to the following two ideas. First, such a theory is a function of a larger systematic approach to philosophy understood as a "sector in the quest for the truth." As Dummett perceives it philosophy has historically been interpreted as being systematic in the following two ways: first, a philosophical investigation was said to be systematic if it intended to issue in an articulated theory like any of the great philosophical systems advanced in the past by philosophers like Spinoza or Kant. Second, a philosophical investigation was said to be systematic if it proceeded according to generally agreed methods of inquiry and its results were generally accepted or rejected according to commonly agreed criteria. While Dummett states that ordinarily these two senses of 'systematic' can be taken as independent of each other, his conception of systematic philosophy, as applied to his philosophy of language, incorporates both:

> When, in the past, philosophy has been systematic, it has generally been systematic in the first sense only, not in the second: I have been advancing the view that, at least in the philosophy of language, philosophy ought henceforward to be systematic in both senses. The subject-matter of this part of philosophy demands an articulated theory; and we have reached a stage in our investigations at which that minimum has been established which makes it possible for future research to proceed according to more or less agreed methods of inquiry, and for its results to be judged in accordance with generally accepted standards.[1]

If it is to be accepted that philosophy is "to proceed according to more or less agreed methods of inquiry" and its results to be judged "in accordance with generally accepted standands", then the fact that philosophy has, throughout its long history, failed to achieve a systematic methodology is a "remarkable fact."[2] While Dummett

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[1] Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,1978), p.455.
[2] Ibid., p.457.

remains guarded about the ultimate veracity of his Fregean picture of philosophy,[3] his work indicates that such an explanation of this fact, if there is one, should start with Frege's work.[4] The production of such a Fregean theory of meaning itself would help explain how this "remarkable fact" came about: for past systematic philosophies will be shown to be incorrect in either not approaching philosophy from a meaning-theoretic point of view, or not maintaing the correct theory of meaning despite approaching philosophy from such a perspective.

Second, such a theory is to provide a systematic account of what it is that we understand when we are said to have mastered a language of expressive power similar to most natural languages. For any declarative sentence of such a language a Dummettian-style theory of meaning will aim at yielding (i) an atomic breakdown of the sentence into its semantically relevant constituents, (ii) a characterisation of the particular senses of the constituents which make up the sentence, and (iii) how the sense of such a sentence will be so determined by the senses of its constituents as typified by the theory.[5]

However, with Dummett's interpretation of Wittgenstein's later philosophy in mind, it is important to ask the following question: to what extent is Dummett's theory of meaning affected by his interpretation of Wittgenstein as a full-blooded conventionalist? The limited aim of the next two chapters is to provide the background to, and the outline of, what Dummett calls his "full-blooded" theory of

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[3] Cf., Dummett's remarks about his dissatisfaction with what he took to be his "definitive prolegomenon" to the theory of meaning in the preface to Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.xi.

[4] "Frege was the first to formulate a systematic theory of meaning for a fragment of natural language; systematic in that it sought to provide an explanation of how the significance of complex expressions, particularly sentences, depends upon the significance of their parts. Unsurprisingly, given Frege's larger purposes in investigating the foundations of mathematics, the fragment which concerned him was free of many of the characteristic features of natural language; in particular, indexical expressions like 'I', 'now', 'here', etc. However, Frege did offer suggestions as to how his apparatus could be brought to bear upon such devices..." Gareth Evans, *The Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p.7.

[5] Cf., Crispin Wright, *Realism, Meaning & Truth* Second Edition (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993), p.47.

meaning. This chapter outlines Donald Davidson's proposal for a theory of meaning for a natural language. The next chapter outlines Dummett's response to Davidson's proposal. This outline of Dummett's theory of meaning provides the basis for considering (a) Dummett's response to Wittgenstein's full-blooded conventionalism as presented in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (chapter three), and (b) whether Dummett can by-pass the negative semantic implications of Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing (chapter four).

1. Tarski

Donald Davidson's idea of a systematic theory of meaning has greatly influenced the form that Dummett's theory has taken. For, despite the fact that there are significant differences between Davidson and Dummett on the particulars of such a meaning-theory, much, if not all, of the work in truth-conditional semantics takes its departure from Davidson's own proposal about the nature of theories of meaning.[6] In fact Davidson's proposal is important for Dummett since it seeks, among other things, to extend the philosophical influence of Frege's logical apparatus to the treatment of verbs of action and to adverbs.[7] For Davidson a correct semantic analysis of action and event sentences will constitute a proof that events exists. Davidson's work in the philosophy of language, then, is a good example of one of Dummett's major ideas: a theory of meaning underlies metaphysics.

We have what Davidson calls 'a formal theory of meaning for a natural language' when we have an axiomatic system which enables us to resolve any well-formed declarative sentence into its semantically contributive constituents. Such a system determines the meaning of a sentence on the basis of its revealed structure and the semantic values of its constituents. Davidson holds that such a system will

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[6] Cf., G. Evans, J. McDowell (eds), *Truth and Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p.vii.
[7] Cf., Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* Second Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981a), p.82.

incorporate an axiomatic theory of truth as its central component. In this sense a theory of meaning will be cashed out in terms of a theory of truth. Its connection with the kind of truth definition that Tarski constructed is explained by Davidson:

> [T]he definition works by giving necessary and sufficient conditions for the truth of every sentence, and to give truth conditions is a way of giving the meaning of a sentence. To know the semantic concept of truth for a language is to know what it is for a sentence - any sentence - to be true, and this amounts, in one good sense we can give to the phrase, to understanding the language.[8]

According to Davidson, if a theory of meaning can be constructed without the need of positing 'meanings' as essential components, then the Fregean approach to semantic compositionality can be called into question as a necessary account of sentence meaning. Such a Davidsonian theory is to be preferred on the grounds that it provides an adequate account of meaning through a theory of truth, without the need to multiply semantic entities beyond necessity.

Since Davidson's theory of meaning relies quite heavily on Tarski's work in formal semantics it is important to briefly consider Tarski's semantic conception of truth.[9] For Tarski a definition of truth is to be, among other things, what he calls 'materially adequate'. A theory of truth is judged to be materially adequate if it does justice to our pre-theoretical intuition of truth as formulated by Aristotle: to say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false; while to say of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is not, is true. While one can speak of the truthfulness of a sentence as consisting in its "agreement with (correspondence to) reality" or "designating an existing state of affairs", for Tarski these formulations are not sufficiently rigorous to warrant serious consideration.

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[8] Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth & Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p.24.
[9] The following overview is based upon Tarski's 1944 paper 'The Semantical Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics' as reprinted in Jay L. Garfield and Murray Kiteley (ed), *Meaning and Truth* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), pp.53-86.

Tarski begins his attempt at making the concept of truth precise by asking the following question: under what conditions is the sentence 'Snow is white' true or false? Given Aristote's conception Tarski says that 'snow is white' is true when it is the case that snow is white, and 'snow is white' is false when it is not the case that snow is white, that is:

The sentence 'snow is white' is true, if and only if, snow is white.

On the right hand side of the bi-conditional ('if and only if') we have the sentence itself, whereas on the left side we have a name of the sentence. In generalizing this equivalence Tarski takes an arbitrary sentence (in this case 'snow is white') and replaces it by the letter 'p'. He then forms the name of this sentence ('snow is white') and replaces it by the letter 'X'. Tarski then considers the logical relation between the two sentences 'X is true' and 'p'. He thinks that from the point of view of his basic conception of truth these sentences are equivalent. The following equivalence, therefore, holds:

(T) X is true, if and only if, p.

This is Tarski's '(T) schema'. The conditions under which we can use the term 'true' as materially adequate can be put more precisely: "we wish to use the term 'true' in such a way that all equivalences of the form (T) can be asserted, and we shall call a definition of truth 'adequate' if all these equivalences follow from it."[10]

It is important to point out here that neither (T) nor any particular instance of the (T) schema can be regarded as a definition of truth *simpliciter* :

> We can only say that every equivalence of the form (T) obtained by replacing 'p' by a particular sentence, and 'X' by a name of this sentence, may be considered a partial definition of truth, which explains wherein the truth of this one individual sentence consists. The general definition has to be, in a certain sense, a logical conjunction of all these partial definitions.[11]

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[10] Ibid., p.56.
[11] Ibid., p.57.

The expression (T) is not a sentence itself but is only a sentence schema. Hence 'p' and 'X' are schema letters which go proxy, respectively, for a sentence in the object language under consideration, and the name of that sentence in the meta-language. This is why the (T) schema itself cannot be considered as a definition of truth; rather it provides the necessary formal structure so that a definition can be obtained. Since the number of partial definitions of truth which make reference to the sentences of a language will be infinite, a precise sense of what is meant by "a logical conjunction of infinitely many sentences" needs to be explained. The (T) schema is only a part of such an explanation.

Tarski calls his idea 'the semantic conception of truth'. Semantics, he says, is a discipline that deals with relations between expressions of a language and the objects that are referred to by those expressions. Typical examples of such semantic concepts are: 'designation', 'satisfaction', and 'definition'. By taking 'satisfaction' as an example we can obtain the following semantic explanation of the sense in which the sentence 'snow is white' is meaningful: 'snow' satisfies the sentential function (the condition) 'x is white'. 'Satisfaction', and the other two concepts, express semantic relations. The concept of truth denotes a class of certain expressions (sentences) and is therefore of a different logical nature. Tarski neverthless points out that when one considers how sentences are meaningful, reference is made not only to the sentences themselves, but to the objects "talked about" by these sentences. As a result:

> [I]t turns out that the simplest and the most natural way of obtaining an exact definition of truth is one which involves the use of other semantic notions, e.g., the notion of satisfaction. It is for these reasons that we count the concept of truth which is discussed here among the concepts of semantics, and the problem of defining truth proves to be closely related to the more general problem of setting up the foundations of theoretical semantics.[12]

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[12] Ibid., p.57.

Well known antinomies arise within natural language. Tarski turns to the problem of specifying the formal structure and the vocabulary of a language that will avoid such antinomies. The following conditions are to be met by a language which is exactly specified:

(1) It must unambiguously characterize the class of all of those words which are to be characterised as meaningful.

(2) It must indicate all of the words without defining them (the primitive terms of the language).

(3) It must provide the rules of definition for the introduction of new or defined terms.

(4) It must set up criteria for distinguishing within the class of expressions those which are to be called 'sentences'.

(5) It must formulate the conditions under which a sentence within this formalized language can be rightly asserted.

(6) It must indicate all of the primitive sentences (axioms), that is, those sentences which are asserted without proof.

(7) It must give the rules of inference for the language so that one can deduce new asserted sentences from the ones which have been previously asserted. The axioms and sentences that are so deduced from them and from the rules of inference are said to be 'theorems' or 'provable sentences'.

It is only by meeting these conditions that the concept of truth can be made precise and rigorous:

> The problem of the definition of truth obtains a precise meaning and can be solved in a rigorous way only for those languages whose structure has been exactly specified. For other languages - thus, for all natural, "spoken" languages - the meaning of the problem is more or less vague, and its solution can have only an approximate character. Roughly speaking, the approximation consists in replacing a

natural language (or a portion of it in which we are interested) by one whose structure is exactly specified, and which diverges from the given language "as little as possible.[13]

For Tarski a language that is 'semantically closed' is one which, in addition to its various expressions, (a) contains the names of these expressions, (b) contains the semantic terms such as 'true' which refer to the sentences of the language, (c) all of the sentences which determine the usage of the term 'true' can be asserted in the language, and (d) the ordinary laws of logic hold within this language. In order to avoid the antinomies that arise within a semantically closed language, Tarski recommends that we "decide not to use any language which is semantically closed in the sense given":

This restriction would of course be unacceptable for those who, for reasons which are not clear to me, believe that there is only one "genuine" language (or, at least, that all "genuine" languages are mutually translatable). However, this restriction does not affect the needs or interests of science in any essential way. The languages (either the formalized languages or - what is more frequently the case - the portions of everyday language) which are used in scientific discourse do not have to be semantically closed. This is obvious in case linguistic phenomena and, in particular, semantic notions do not enter in any way into the subject matter of a science; for in such a case the language of this science does not have to be provided with any semantic terms at all.[14]

Given Tarski's contraint on semantically closed languages, a definition of truth must use two different languages:

(1) The object-language: "the language which is "talked about" and which is the subject matter of the whole discussion; the definition of truth which we are seeking applies to the sentences of this language."[15]

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[13] Ibid., p.59.
[14] Ibid., p.61.
[15] Ibid., p.62.

(2) The meta-language: "the language in which we "talk about" the first language, and in terms of which we wish, in particular, to construct the definition of truth for the first language".[16]

In this sense the definition of truth is to be constructed in the meta-language. Therefore, since the symbol 'p' in (T) stands for an arbitrary sentence in the object-language, it follows that the meta-language must contain the object-language as a part. 'X' in (T) represents the name of the sentence which 'p' stands for: "we see therefore that the meta-language must be rich enough to provide possibilities of constructing a name for every sentence of the object-language."[17]

On Tarski's conception, therefore, truth is a meta-linguistic concept about the semantic status of the object-language sentences which are being examined. From here we can get a clear sense of what Davidson finds useful in all of this for his theory of meaning. He wants a semantic theory to be a theory of a natural language "couched in" a natural language (this forces Davidson to consider the problem of inconsistency which, according to Tarski, arises for all languages which are semantically closed). If we restrict ourselves to the methods Tarski has set forth for semantic investigation, such a position leads to the rise of the classical semantic paradoxes since, as Tarski points out, a characteristic feature of colloquial language is its universality:

> If we are to maintain this universality of everyday language in connection with semantical investigations, we must, to be consistent, admit into the language, in addition to its sentences and other expressions, also the names of these sentences and expressions, and sentences containing these names, as well as such semantic expressions as 'true sentence'.[18]

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[16] Ibid.,p.62.
[17] Ibid., p.62.
[18] From Tarski, 'The Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages', as quoted in Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth & Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp.71-2.

Given the unattainability of the ideal of a theory of truth for a natural language in a natural language on the basis of Tarski's methods, Davidson suggests that we try to give up as little as possible of the advantages of such an approach without having to draw upon conceptual resources not found within the language itself to which the truth predicate applies.[19] Since the truth predicate itself cannot be in the object-language, we should require no more than a *theory* of truth: anything else would widen the ontological resources between the object-language and the meta-language, thus threatening the nominalistic demands which Davidson's proposal embodies (given the semantically closed status of the language, the ontology of both the object-language and the meta-language would, in Davidson's theory, remain the same). With this in mind Davidson follows Tarski by (i) considering an arbitrary sentence, (ii) putting quotation marks around the sentence, and then (iii) adjoining the words 'is true' to the sentence. The sentence thus formed will be one which is true iff the original sentence is true. And to understand what it *means* to say that such a sentence is true one simply disquotes the quoted sentence and takes away 'is true'. The claim here is that to say that something is true does not necessarily commit oneself to what that something in turn either means, or how that something is to be verified. As we have seen the sentence 'snow is white' is equi-assertible with '"snow is white" is true'. The notion of truth on such a scheme turns out to be neutral with respect to differing philosophical positions, providing someone like Davidson with a concept of truth that meets the nominalistic demands of his own theory of meaning.

2. Davidson

What is to be expected from such a Davidsonian theory? Before this question is answered we should know what not to expect from such a theory. First, a Davidsonian theory of meaning would remain silent about linguistic practices like

[19] Cf.,Ibid., p.72.

commanding, asking, or wishing. To consider these practices such a theory needs to be supplemented by, in the terminology of Frege, a theory of force. A theory of force would make clear what difference it would make whether such a sentence, which the meaning theory assigns a truth-value, is to be understood as a command, a question, or a wish. Second, such a theory of meaning will keep silent on what some would think is the most important issue which a theory of meaning must consider, namely, the nature of language. What is a language? What distinguishes language-use from any other rule-governed, goal-directed activity, and what makes mouthings and inscriptions into uses of language? What do we understand when we say that we understand how to speak a language? Answers to these questions would not be provided.

Given the distinction between stating what one knows concerning a certain item of knowledge, and providing an explanation of what it means to have such knowledge, it can be said that, appearances to the contrary, a Davidsonian meaning theory can be expected to provide an account of what a speaker understands when he understands a language. However, such a theory will only be concerned with what a person understands by a particular expression in the object-language, rather than being concerned with what such knowledge ultimately consists in. That Davidson so intended his theory to be concerned with what a speaker understands by an expression is indicated by his suggestion that such a theory be constrained by the need for the theory to be finitely axiomatizable, and that the means by which each meaning theorem is derived reflects the actural structure of the sentence. These two constraints provide the means for constructing an account of an important epistemic capacity that we all share: the capacity to recognise the meaning of new significant sentences that we have yet to consider.

Now one of the reasons why Davidson's proposal has raised such interest is because of its commitment to shed significant light on the concept of meaning

without having recourse to the notion of intension. It is obvious that Tarski's work has been considerably helpful here. But Davidson's use of Tarski can be characterised as an instance of a general tendency: running together two incompatible uses to which Tarski's findings have been put. First, some have taken Tarski's results as an explication of truth and then have speculated on how such semantic notions like 'satisfaction' might be explained within a physicalist metaphysics.[20] Second, others have understood Tarski's results to consist in pointing the way toward understanding semantics as the meta-linguistic analysis of truth-conditions. The former interpretation takes the meaning of sentences as given in order to define the concept of truth, while the latter takes the notion of truth as given in order to define the concept of meaning. The early papers of Davidson provide us with a good example of how these two interpretations are run together (despite the fact that these two interpretations move in opposite directions). Davidson speaks of a Tarskian definition of truth as providing necessary and sufficient conditions for the truth of every sentence for the purpose of giving the meaning of each sentence. But, as Davidson came to see, Tarski assumes the concept of meaning in the meta-language (his Convention T) in order to analyse the concept of truth, while Davidson's strategy was the reverse: he assumes the concept of truth in the meta-language in order to analyse the concept of meaning.[21]

One way to analyse this procedure of Davidson's critically is to point out that you cannot have an adequate understanding of one conception at the expense of the other. Dummett, for example, says the following about Frege's recognition of this fact:

One of the things that Frege saw is now a commonplace, namely that the concepts of meaning and truth are inextricably bound together. A failure to perceive this

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[20] Cf., John McDowell, 'Physicalism and Primitive Denotation: Field on Tarski', in Jay L. Garfield and Murray Kiteley (ed), *Meaning and Truth* (New York, Paragon House, 1991).
[21] Cf., Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth & Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p.xiv.

underlay the classical 'theories of truth', developed contemporaneously with Frege's work, theories like the correspondence theory and the coherence theory. Such theories considered meaning as given...[However, one cannot give an] illuminating account of the concept of truth which presupposes meaning as already given: we cannot be in the position of grasping meaning but as yet unaware of the condition for the truth of propositions. Truth and meaning can only be explained *together* , as part of a single theory.[22]

While this is a correct and important observation, it is not as if it has gone totally unnoticed by those committed to a Davidsonian-style theory of meaning. In fact, it can be argued that Davidson's attempt to give a theoretical account of meaning has taken off from the recognition that the semantics which Frege produced in light of this observation seems to be caught in a circle. Frege held both that the sense of a sentence is a function of its parts, and that we are never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a sentence. The sense of a word, therefore, has to be seen as an abstraction from the totality of sentences in which it occurs. But how could the sense of sentences be determined on such an account given that there are infinitely many different sentences in which a word could possibly occur?[23]

According to Davidson, the way out of this "semantic circle" has come to be given by envisaging the resources of a language as characterized by axioms of a theory of meaning, and from these axioms particular theorems could be derived fixing the meaning of the infinitely many sentences within the language. In this development, part of Tarski's approach has been both adopted and another dropped: the (T) schema has been adopted, while Tarski's attempt to *define* what it is for a sentence to be true using the notion of 'satisfaction' has been dropped. The former aspect of Tarski's work relating to the biconditionals is now seen as providing the

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[22] Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.15.
[23] Cf., Richard Campbell, *Truth and Historicity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.375.

basic form of the theorems of the proposed theory of meaning, rather than functioning merely as a test for the adequacy of Tarski's definition of truth.

3. Problems

But how is it that (T) sentences themselves are to be recognized and verified? On the Tarskian scheme of things a (T) sentence is taken to be true because the right-hand side of the biconditional is assumed to be a translation in the meta-language of the object-language sentence that is mentioned on the left-hand side of the biconditional. But given the constraints of radical translation (as articulated by Quine and appropriated by Davidson), one cannot assume in advance that a correct translation can be recognized and verified. Davidson rephrases Tarski's Convention T in order not to appeal to the concept of translation; it is to be understood as positing a *correlation* between object-language and meta-language sentences. He then goes on to argue that a theory of meaning which is in line with Convention T is empirical and open to testing against the data that is provided by the usage of speakers of the object-language. We cannot, then, rely on any criteria of translation but must adhere to how the language is actually used in speech-situations, despite the inevitable trade-offs that result between "the beliefs we attribute to a speaker and the interpretations we give his words."[24]

Davidson proposed that the totality of a radical interpreter's (T) sentences should "optimally fit" the evidence about the sentences that are held true by the speakers of the language. This notion of 'optimal fit' is filled in by Davidson's Principle of Charity: "just as we must maximize agreement, or risk not making sense of what the alien is talking about, so we must maximize the self-consistency we attribute to him, on pain of not understanding *him* ."[25] This principle, however, has been objected to on the grounds that it is not substantial enough. It does not

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[24] Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth & Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p.139.
[25] Ibid., p.27.

consider the many differences that one would expect to find among the many various living communities in different historical periods, and how the actual living conditions affect these differences.[26] So until such a theory of meaning is combined with a more substantial anthropological approach, it seems that this line of investigation might well be *too* charitable for its own good.

While this criticism is an appropriate response to the prima facie complexity of various living communities of language users, a related, but much more telling, aspect of this Davidsonian approach needs to be examined. Davidson's appropriation of Tarski's results is characterised by reversing the priority in the meta-language from meaning to truth: Davidson's theory assumes that we already have the notion of truth in the metalanguage at our disposal. This allows Davidson to refer to features in the metalanguage when deciding on the eventual substance of an adequate theory of meaning. This use of the concept of truth is of a different order, however, than the use to which truth-conditions are put in verifying object-language (T) sentences. Christopher Peacocke explains:

> The T-sentences...contain the predicate 'true'; so it is not unreasonable to claim that to be able to verify the T-sentences, we must be possessed of *some* access to the notion of truth independently of a recursion to a number of particular languages. Put without the epistemological slant, the question is what it is for one truth theory rather than another to be applicable to the actual language of a population...We can hardly avoid raising the question of the sense of 'true in the language of population P' for 'variable P'. To request an answer to this question is not to criticize Davidson's programme: it is only to suggest that a lacuna be filled.[27]

Peacocke thinks that in filling in this "lacuna" we are forced to focus our attention upon whether a particular interpreted language is the actual language of the population under consideration. Such an interpretation would require that we

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[26] Cf., David Wiggens, 'What Would be a Substantial Theory of Truth?' in Z. van Straaten (ed), *Philosophical Subjects* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p.199.

[27] Christopher Peacocke, 'Truth Definitions and Actual Languages' in G. Evans, J. McDowell (eds), *Truth and Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp.162-163.

know which interpreted language a particular population uses when we know the truth-conditions of the denoting sentences of that language, something which, as Peacocke admits, we are far from knowing.[28] If we can make explicit, and then adequately fill out, the relation between 'interpreted' and 'actual' language, then Peacocke is convinced that we are well on our way to possessing the necessary and sufficient conditions required for an adequate truth (meaning) theory for the language (generally conceived along Davidsonian lines).

The question here concerns the ultimate adequacy of such a theory given the prior assumption of truth in the meta-language. Can someone assume the concept of truth at the outset of a semantic investigation of a particular language while simultaneously doing justice to the correct observation that this concept arises out of the practice of making assertions? It is at this point that Michael Dummett raises serious objections to the idea that truth can be so considered in isolation from acquiring and manifesting our use of language.

[28] Cf., Ibid., p.164.

Chapter Two
The Idea of a Theory of Meaning II: Dummett's Response

What makes Davidson's use of Tarski's (T) schema important for Dummett's criticism of Davidson is that this schema is a way of stating the 'equivalence thesis' concerning truth: that for any sentence p, p is equivalent to 'it is true that p'. The difficulty that Dummett has with this thesis concerns our grasp of truth-conditions. If one stipulates the equivalence thesis as yielding a complete explanation of the concept of truth, then this is incompatible with the thesis that a grasp of the meaning of a sentence consists in a grasp of its truth-conditions. Dummett puts it like this:

> If we do not yet understand the object-language, we shall have no idea of the point of introducing the predicate 'true', as applied to its sentences, in accordance with the truth-definition; the truth-definition, which lays down the conditions under which an arbitrary sentence of the object-language is true, cannot simultaneously provide us with a grasp of the meaning of each such sentence, unless, indeed, we already know in advance what the point of the predicate so defined is supposed to be. But, if we do know in advance the point of introducing the predicate 'true', then we know something about the concept of truth expressed by that predicate which is not embodied in that, or any other, truth-definition, stipulating the application of the predicate to the sentences of some language...If it [is] possible to explain the notion of meaning in terms of that of truth, [and] if the meaning of an expression [is] to be regarded as a principle governing the contribution that it [makes] to determining the truth-conditions of sentences containing it, then it must be possible also to say more about the concept of truth than under which specific conditions it [applies] to given sentences. Since meaning depends, ultimately and exhaustively, on use, what [is] required [is] a uniform means of characterising the use of a sentence, given its truth-conditions.[1]

Dummett's point here seems clear and incontrovertible: the problem with the Tarski-Davidson approach is that it does not adequately address the *normativity* of

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[1] Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.xxi.

the truth predicate when it is applied to the use of sentences (what we use the concept of truth *for*).

Dummett's early view on this issue was that the equivalence thesis *could* provide a complete account of truth and that sentence-meaning, therefore, had to be explained in terms other than truth-conditions. Truth, therefore, would play no explanatory role whatsoever. Thus Dummett urged that meaning be explained in terms of the recognizable conditions under which a sentence may be correctly asserted, rather than in terms of the possibly unrecognizable conditions under which a sentence is true. This approach shifts the question about the point of 'truth' from a strictly formal approach (Tarski-Davidson) to the practical point about the nature of assertion. Truth is directed toward those sentences whose truth-value can be determined.

Dummett's later papers, however, reject the consequence of this early view, namely, that a sentence cannot be said to be true irrespective of an effective method for deciding the truth of the sentence. As Dummett explains in the preface to *Truth and Other Enigmas* , his acceptance of the equivalence thesis at the time of originally writing his 1959 paper 'Truth' was a bit premature: there is a sense in which the meaning of a statement is related to truth-conditions, but the problem arises over which notion of truth is to be admissable.[2]

Since coming to the view that theories of meaning which presuppose an understanding of the meta-language are mistaken (what Dummett calls 'modest theories'), he now seeks to retain a kind of truth-conditional account of sentence meaning while restricting the concept of truth to that of recognizable truth. So, to get clear on what we mean by 'truth' we need to focus our attention upon how this concept arises from the actual practice of making assertions, since Dummett thinks that without a doubt "the root notion of truth is that of the correctness of an

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[2] Ibid., p.xxii.

assertion."[3] What we want out of a theory of meaning, therefore, is a clear and precise understanding not just of what a person understands by a particular expression in the object-language, but also of what such knowledge ultimately consists in. What is at issue here is the concept of truth.

1. Truth

The key to capturing the correct notion of truth for a theory of meaning arises out of Dummett's problem with the Tarski-Davidson truth definition: that any truth definition which stipulates the conditions under which a sentence of the object-language is true cannot simultaneously provide us with a grasp of the meaning of each sentence. In this criticism Dummett is highlighting a crucial feature of understanding the concept of truth which goes back to Frege. Like Davidson after him Frege does not consider the *point* of introducing the concept of truth. For example, Dummett argues that for Frege the 'TRUE' and the 'FALSE' (considered as abstract objects) are references of sentences and not propositions.[4] This is so, in short, because the reference of a complex expression is determined by the reference of its constituent parts. If we substitute one singular term within a sentence for another which has a different sense but has the same reference, the sense of the entire sentence, that is, the proposition which the sentence expresses, of necessity changes. What does not change throughout this process, it seems, is the actual truth-value of the sentence.

Now as it stands there does not seem to be a problem with the idea that sentences have references. What is questionable, Dummett argues, is the fact that Frege thinks these references (truth-values) are abstract objects.[5] Dummett explains that when we engage in the use of a language we do so with a certain aim in mind:

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[3] Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.168.
[4] Cf., Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp.1-24.
[5] Ibid., p.19.

we seek to make *true* (correct) assertions. In likening truth and falsity to the winning and losing of a game Dummett seeks to show that by simply giving a minimal description of the possible positions that could obtain at the end of the game does not tell us that the *point* of the game is to actually reach one of these three positions (what we call 'winning', the other two positions being 'losing' and 'tying' respectfully). In the same way Frege's minimal description of truth and falsity as the references of sentences does not tell us how we are to achieve the aim of using our language. So, Dummett argues, it is incorrect to establish a criterion for winning a game of chess, for example, apart from the actual learning and playing of the game. In the same way the concept of truth is not something that we set up as a criterion *apart from* learning and using a particular language: "what the truth of a statement consists in always plays the same role in determining the sense of that statement, and a theory of truth must be possible in the sense of an account of what that role is."[6] On this account, the sense of a statement is determined by knowing when, and in what circumstances, it is true or false. Truth and falsity are part of, not prior to, how we use the language (and the actual learning of the language determines how we eventually characterize truth and falsity in relation to the statements of the language). In short, to classify statements in a language as either true or false one needs a general account of the point of so classifying them, and until that is achieved there remains little, if any, interest in such a classification. If a truth-conditional semantics (like Frege's and Davidson's) does not determine which statements are to be classified under the catagories of 'true' or 'false', or how they are to be so classified, then, according to Dummett, it is questionable whether such an account can provide us with an account of how our language is said to be meaningful. However, this does not mean that Frege's approach was entirely incorrect; what it does mean is that certain aspects of Frege's account need to be

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[6] Ibid., p.8.

supplemented with ideas that consider what Dummett describes as the *social* character of meaning.[7]

The equivalence thesis on truth stipulates that the predicates 'true' and 'false' are superfluous in that they can be eliminated without any semantic loss. Thus 'It is true that p' has the same sense as the sentence 'p'. On this conception we use these predicates for pragmatic reasons (emphasis and style), and, as Dummett explains, because we often make reference to propositions indirectly.[8] This suggests that the only theoretical role that the concept of truth has is *within* the language, and not *apart from* the language. But if we admit that there are sentences which express propositions, but are neither true nor false, then to maintain the truth of every instance of 'It is true that p iff p' would be inconsistent. Yet, even if we deny that there are sentences which express propositions but are neither true nor false, this theory, according to Dummett, cannot give the *whole* account of truth precisely because of its explicit use of the truth-table in giving the meanings of the logical connectives. Dummett remarks:

> In order to justify asserting 'P or not P', we appeal to the truth-table explanation of the meaning of 'or'. But if the whole explanation of the meanings of 'true' and 'false' is given by 'It is true that p if and only if p' and 'It is false that p if and only if not p', this appeal fails. The truth-table tells us, e.g., that from P we may infer 'P or Q' (in particular, 'P or not P'); but *that* much we already knew from the explanation of 'or' which we have rejected as insufficient. The truth-table does not show us that we are entitled to assert 'P or not P' in every possible case, since this is to assume that every statement is either true or false.[9]

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[7] Cf., Michael Dummett, 'The Social Character of Meaning' in Ibid., pp.424-426. The supplementation, however, is not that extensive: "[One] might defend Frege [against the charge of not considering the social character of meaning] by saying that he was not primarily concerned with describing language as it is used in practice, but with a language purged of the defects of natural language, among which are variations of sense from speaker to speaker. In any case, while the social character of language is of great importance in some contexts, an acknowledgement of it does not seem to call for any very extensive revision in a theory of sense such as Frege's." p.426.

[8] "[Our] explanation of 'is true' determines uniquely the sense, or at least the application, of this predicate: for any given proposition there is a sentence expressing that proposition, and that sentence states the conditions under which the proposition is true." Ibid., p.4.

[9] Ibid., pp.6-7.

On the equivalence thesis, therefore, one must already know what it means to assert 'that P' before the assertion is made, yet this "was precisely what was supposed to be explained to [us]."[10] Those who hold to the equivalence theory are therefore faced with a choice: either supplement the theory, or give up the preconception of the classical account of truth and falsity in our understanding of sentence meaning.

Dummett sets out two principles which make up his conception of truth: first, if a statement is true, there must be something in virture of which it is true;[11] and second, if a statement is true, it must be in principle possible to know that it is true.[12] The application of these two principles depends quite heavily upon the way that "in principle possible" in the second principle is construed. Those with a traditional truth-conditional semantics will have to interpret this in a fairly generous way; by imputing to us, for example, a knowledge of the use of, in principle, undecidable statements by making reference to beings very much unlike ourselves who have such knowledge (in the theological case, positing God as having direct insight into counter-factual reality). Such a procedure "fails to answer the question how we come to be able to assign to our sentences a meaning which is dependent upon a use to which we are unable to put them."[13] Such a failure prompts Dummett to propose a different semantic theory incorporating the above two principles.

2. Intuitionism

Dummett is lead to make a case for defining truth in terms other than those found in traditional truth-conditional accounts. The intuitionistic account of the nature of mathematics provides for Dummett the prototype for this different

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[10] Ibid., p.7.
[11] Cf., Ibid., p.89.
[12] Cf., Ibid., p.100.
[13] Ibid., p.100.

semantic theory. It is to this area of Dummett's research that we now briefly direct our attention.

How does intuitionism function in Dummett's theory of meaning? If it serves as the main reason for verifiability to be the central notion within this theory, then at least this part of the theory is open to the charge that it rests upon a mistaken analogy with a dispute within the philosophy of mathematics. One could argue that it is precisely the dis-analogy between mathematical and ordinary objects that precludes intuitionism from contributing positively toward the general form of a theory of meaning.[14] It seems, however, that such an argument fails to consider that Dummett's use of intuitionism is linked to a wider philosophical context, a context which provides the reason and motivation for such a use.

In 'The Philosophical Basis of Intuitionistic Logic' Dummett considers the possible reasons why someone would repudiate the canons of classical logic in favour of an intuitionistic logic for mathematical reasoning.[15] Dummett thinks that this repudiation is ultimately a concern with the most fundamental feature of intuitionistic mathematics, its underlying logic. But this concern with intuitionistic logic itself does not turn on any further mathematical considerations, but only on questions of meaning. Dummett presents two lines of reasoning for replacing a classical reading of the logical constants with an intuitionistic one for mathematical reasoning, both arguments leaning quite heavily upon Wittgensteinian ideas about language.[16] First, if we take with full seriousness the implications of the idea of language as an instrument of social communication, then the meaning of a

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[14] The charge runs as follows: if the concept of verification derives its centrality in a theory of meaning from the concept of proof in mathematics, and if such a model is shown to be unable to make sense of metaphysical issues dealing with physical phenomena, then verification ought to be dropped as unhelpful and irrelevant. The attempt to identify the issue of Realism with an issue about language, and then to use the notion of verifiability to tests its meaningfulness, fails because it rests on this mistaken analogy with mathematics.

[15] Cf., 'The Philosophical Basis of Intuitionistic Logic' in Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp.215-247.

[16] Ibid., p. 226.

statement within the language of mathematics must consist in its role as an instrument of communication between individuals (and this involves considering how a statement is used in order to establish such communication). It follows therefore that the meaning of a mathematical statement is determined by its use. But what is actually known by the speaker when she knows how to use mathematical statements for communication? Part of this knowledge is what Dummett calls 'verbalisable knowledge', knowledge of the rules in accordance with which a symbol or an expression is used. But to suppose that this is all that such knowledge consisted in would be a mistake. We need to consider the fact that to state the meaning of an expression already presupposes a sufficiently rich knowledge of the language on behalf of the speaker. In order to avoid an infinite regress of positing richer and richer grasps of linguistic content Dummett concludes that the knowledge of the rules which constitutes the understanding of the language of mathematics must be 'implicit' (this concept of 'implicit knowledge' is of utmost importance for Dummett's philosophy of language and is the point at which the greatest problems arise for Dummett's theory of meaning). But since the ascription of such knowledge to a speaker can only be meaningful if she can manifest that knowledge in some way, it follows that to say that she has grasped a concept (eg. 'addition'), is to say that she has a capacity to use this concept in a certain way. Any investigation into the semantic structure and content of this implicit knowledge must proceed through an analysis of how this is manifested in our linguistic behavior.

The second line of reasoning considers the importance of how we actually learn to reason mathematically. Dummett argues that when we actually learn the language of a mathematical theory we are taught how to use certain statements within this language, that is, we learn what role these statements play in various mathematical proofs. We are shown, and taught, these statements in these ways

because they are all that *can* be shown to us. Because there is nothing more that can contribute to the meaning of these statements, nothing which transcends the use that is made of such statements that could contribute to their meaning, to say that someone has grasped the meaning of a mathematical statement or theory is to say that they have the capacity to make a correct use of these statements. To assume that there is an ingredient of meaning of a statement that transcends its use is to make the language of mathematics ineffable:

> [To suppose this] is to suppose that someone might have learned all that is directly taught when the language of a mathematical theory is taught to him, and might then behave in every way like someone who understood that language, and yet not actually understand it, or understand it only incorrectly. But to suppose this is to make meaning ineffable, that is, in principle incommunicable. If this is possible, then no one individual ever has a guarantee that he is understood by any other individual; for all he knows, or can ever know, everyone else may attach to his words or to the symbols which he employs a meaning quite different from that which he attaches to them.[17]

This concern with an ingredient of meaning which transcends its use is, insofar as actual mathematical practice is concerned, of no demonstrated use. If mathematics is a body of theory on which many individuals are corporately engaged and through its practice can communicate their results to others, then positing this other ingredient of meaning both makes such communication impossible and also adds nothing of explanatory value toward showing how it is meaningful.

Because there are a multiplicity of uses for mathematical statements within the actual practice of mathematics, and given the demand for harmony between the various *conditions for* and the *consequences of* these statements, Dummett thinks that no existing practice of mathematical reasoning is sacrosanct. So long as there is a lack of fit between the *conditions for* and the *consequences of* these statements within mathematics the thesis that meaning is exhaustively determined by use does

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[17] Ibid., pp.217-18.

not conflict with a revisionary attitude to some parts of the language of mathematics. It is on these grounds that Dummett seeks to repudiate the classical understanding of mathematical reasoning that is embodied in platonism: that to understand a mathematical sentence or symbol is to understand the conditions under which such a sentence or symbol is true, irrespective of whether we can actually recognise such conditions as obtaining. If to grasp the meaning of a mathematical sentence is to be able to manifest such knowledge in actual mathematical reasoning, it is unclear how someone can grasp the meaning of a statement when the truth-conditions under which such a statement is true are incapable of being actually recognized as true. When a statement within mathematics is not effectively decidable the type of knowledge which is being ascribed to someone who is said to understand an undecidable sentence is, on this classical truth-conditional theory, knowledge which transcends the capacity to manifest that knowledge through the use of that sentence. Such a theory is based upon a misunderstanding of the semantic implications of our linguistic practice:

> The actual fact of our linguistic practice is that the only notions of truth and falsity which we have for [undecidable sentences] are ones which do not entitle us to regard the sentence as determinatly true or false independently of our knowledge. The truth of [such sentences] can consist only in the occurrence of the sort of situation in which we have learned to recognize [them] as true, and [their] falsity in the occurence of the sort of situation in which we have learned to recognize [them] as false: since we have no guarantee either that a situation of one or other kind will occur, or that we can bring about such a situation at will, only a misleading picture of what we learned when we learned to use sentences of that form can give us the impression that we possess a notion of truth for [these sentences] relative to which [they] are determinatly either true or false.[18]

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[18] Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* , Second Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981a), p.468.

One of the consequences of adopting *proof* as the central notion in a theory of meaning for mathematical statements is that the law of excluded middle[19] be rejected as a justified form of reasoning. The acceptability of the principle for statements involving quantification over infinite totalities cannot be apprehended simply by an appeal to the model of finite quantification. Such quantification deals with properties that one is able to prove as characteristic of individuals within the domain that we are quantifying over. For example, there is no sense in saying of π that it is either true or false that the sequence '77777' appears in its decimal expansion. On this reading it is simply indeterminate whether this is the case, and it will remain so until we find a demonstrable proof that such a case does, or does not, obtain.

Dummett argues that the abandonment of the law of excluded middle, and its ontological implications, seem to be reinforced by reflection upon Frege's context principle. We cannot, Dummett says, refer to an object (eg. the sequence of five sevens in the decimal expansion of π) except in the course of saying something about it. It therefore follows that any thesis that is concerned with the ontological status of an abstract object must also be one about what makes a statement involving reference to such an object true. Given Frege's principle, we cannot separate the question of the kind of thing which makes statements true, when they are true, from the ontological status of any abstract objects to which statements of a given kind make reference. And given Dummett's heavy commitment to how we acquire and use language, any statements making reference to abstract objects are true only if they can be shown to be true through a particular proof procedure.

How, then, does intuitionism function in Dummett's theory of meaning? It does not provide the main reason for adopting verificationism as the central notion for his theory of meaning. Dummett does not begin with intuitionism because he

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[19] The principle that the disjunction of a statement with its negation is valid.

thinks that a model for understanding mathematical sentences ought to be the model in every other mode of discourse. Rather an intuitionistic reading of the logical constants gets generalized because it is consistent with Dummett's point about the concept of truth arising out of the practice of making assertions.

3. Verificationism

Central to Dummett's conception of truth and meaning is his generalizing to the non-mathematical case of the semantic lessons learned from intuitionism. So, when Dummett considers the difficult question of what constitutes the meaning of a sentence within a language other than mathematics he directs our attention to what a speaker knows when he knows how to use a language. Following his reading of intuitionism he ties understanding to *verification* : an understanding of a statement consists in a capacity to recognize whatever counts as verifying it.

Because this notion of verification is part of his general theory of meaning he thinks that this criterion will have the same kind of status as does a theoretical hypothesis, and therefore will not be required to apply to itself. This is Dummett's argument for by-passing the problem faced by the positivists: the problem that the verifiability criterion is itself non-verifiable.[20] But this criterion derives its force not from the mathematical case primarily, but from his commitment to how we actually acquire the understanding that we do of our language. If there are no evidential conditions under which we might learn a particular concept, then we cannot grasp it. We simply cannot understand the truth-conditions of a sentence which go beyond our recognitional-capacities. Dummett puts emphasis upon our

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[20] On what basis does Dummett think that he can make a distinction between philosophical and other kinds of sentences? Since Dummett thinks that the theoretical impossibility to learn and understand a language is a *reductio ad absurdum* of holism, he can make a case for having theoretical terms that derive their meaning through inferential connections at the center of the linguistic web. While he is not clear on this point, it seems that such a case could be made.

observational abilities and spatio-temporal viewpoint because what matters to him is what *we* know and what *we* understand.[21]

This verificationist position of Dummett's is criticised because it is based upon what some take to be an unduly narrow construal of evidence. We are led to such naturally unintuitive claims about the gaps in our understanding concerning areas which we naturally think we have a fair bit of knowledge: unrestricted spatial generalizations, descriptions of the remote past, and hypotheses about the mental life of other humans and animals. Because such conclusions seem so unintuitive the claim is made that the problem must be with Dummett's strong verificationism. Dummett thinks, however, that rejecting his position because it is "intuitively repugnant"[22] is not philosophically pertinent. To widen the construal of evidence by holding that only cognitive capacities, and not physical capacities, matter when considering how verificationism fits into the notion of truth is to take away the empirical and practical urge behind Dummett's verificationism. The urge behind such verificationism is that meaning, truth, and objectivity are directly connected to human inquiry. It is because Dummett takes with full seriousness the implications of the idea that language is an instrument of social communication that he requires such a strong verificationism. He thinks that if we are to learn a language we must be able, in principle, to check the fit between someone's assertions, the use to which these assertions are put, and the conditions under which such assertions are true. For Dummett there really is nothing gained from wondering if a statement is "really

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[21] Cf., Dummett's discussion of how his particular brand of anti-realism can be made consistent with traditional theism by approaching God's omniscience from the side of a theory of meaning: "Granted, God's thoughts are not our thoughts, but that seems beside the point; we are concerned not with divine concepts but with God's knowledge of truths involving human concepts." Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.349.

[22] Michael Dummett, 'The Metaphysics of Verificationism' in A. Schilpp (ed), *The Philosophy of A.J. Ayer* (Illinois: Open Court, 1992), p.146.

true" apart from the truth-conditions which constrain this statement. The quest for truth cannot transcend our actual inquiry.[23]

Dummett's objection against those who hold to a notion of truth that is "verification-transcendent" (realist) is that once you invoke it the meaning of a sentence is then sundered from its use since its truth-conditions are said to be independent of any method of verification. The use of a sentence is, on Dummett's reading, connected with verification conditions since what we are aiming at is the making of correct assertions, and the concept of correctness is either directly connected to the verification conditions under which such an assertion is given. As a result Dummett takes issue with (i) the view that a theory of meaning can assume that every sentence is either true or false (bivalence), (ii) that it can accept a classical two-valued semantics, and (iii) that it can accept a truth-conditional theory of meaning based upon that semantics. It is not enough for the realist simply to state that all sentences are true or false, that their truth value is determined by a reality that is independent of us and that they somehow relate to; rather the realist should provide an account of how they are so determined which justifies the use of classical semantics.

It is important to point out that presupposed by all who are engaged in this dispute (realist and anti-realist alike) is that a truth-conditional approach to semantics is central; however there is some disagreement over how this approach is to be understood. One can have a truth-conditional approach to semantics without universalizing bivalence, without accepting a classical two-valued semantics, and, obviously, without having a truth-conditional theory of meaning that is based upon such a semantics. Dummett's is a good example of a truth-conditional approach to semantics which (i) does not universalize bivalence (he restricts this principle to

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[23] This is why Dummett thinks that a verificationist theory of meaning is not, in principle, incompatible with a pragmatist theory of meaning; cf., Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.321.

sentences which are determinate), which (ii) does not accept a classical two-valued semantics (this is so given Dummett's strong identification between truth-condtions and language-use), and which (iii) does not have a truth-conditional theory of meaning that is based upon such a semantics (rather it is based upon a semantics which has as its central notion that of verification, not truth; although, as we have mentioned, truth does play an important explanatory role in his semantics).

Borrowing Quine's picture of language as a "web" Dummett explains that mathematical and observational sentences are different in the degree to which they relate to their method of verification: in the mathematical case (those statements which are near the center of the web) the verifications are without sense-data, in the observational case (statements near the periphery of the web) the verifications are without inferences. But it is important to make a distinction here between what Dummett calls 'direct' and 'indirect' verifications. Verifications which are indirect (not conclusive) are associated with a speaker's grounds for making an assertion, whereas direct verifications are the conclusive actual grounds in terms of which the meaning of an assertion is given. It is in terms of these that we come to know, through increased experience, the various ways that allow us to conclude indirectly that something is the case. For a sentence such as 'It is raining' the verificationist would insist that the possibility of directly recognizing the rain is what confers meaning on the sentence. Thus the general question of what it is to know the meaning of a sentence has the informative and biting answer that it is to know what counts as a direct verification of it.[24] Knowing the meaning of 'It is raining' is to know what observations are actual observations that it is raining; to know this is to

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[24] This is derived from the mathematical case where Dummett speaks of the notion of 'proof' and makes the distinction between a 'canonical proof' and a 'demonstration'. It is in terms of the former notion that the meanings of the logical constants are given, not the latter. Dummet does admit, however, that the notion of a canonical proof is obscure. This admission seems to generalize to the non-mathematical case when consideration is given to the notion of verification. Cf. 'The Philosophical Basis of Intuitionistic Logic' in Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp.240-243.

have a capacity that is not obtained from verbal explanation but from a practical training.

Are there direct verifications? In one sense an affirmative answer to this question is obvious when dealing with observation sentences ('It is raining'). For mathematical sentences we require a proof procedure so as to recognize their truth; if this is obtained then we have direct verifications for groups of sentences in this domain of discourse as well. But what about sentences which require verification through sense-experience and non-deductive inference (for example, universal sentences dealing with physical phenomena)?[25] The specification of direct verifications for these kinds of sentences must be formulated through the use of very general concepts that are not yet related to our present scientific practice of investigating the truth of these kind of sentences. Trying to come up with a solution to problems such as these, problems which are related to classical problems of induction, is to expect too much.

Dummett, in places, seems to be aware of these problems and comes quite close to being receptive towards the idea of verification-transcendence. In the Preface to *Truth and Other Enigmas* he writes that "it is misleading to concentrate too heavily, as I have usually done, on the form of anti-realist theory of meaning in which the meaning of a statement is given in terms of what conclusively verifies it; often such conclusive verification is not to be had."[26] Dummett refers us to his paper 'Realism' in the same volume where he writes:

> [T]here may indeed be some empirical statements whose truth can never be known with certainty [cf. universal statements concerning physical phenomena], for which there cannot be any wholly conclusive evidence...for such statements there will, for

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[25] Cf., Dag Prawitz, 'Dummett on a theory of meaning and its impact on logic' in Barry M. Taylor (ed), *Michael Dummett: Contributions to Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), pp.143-44. Prawitz gives the example of a universal sentence about the relation between the pressure and volume of a given mass of gas.

[26] Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.xxxviii.

the anti-realist, be no question of there being anything in virtue of which they are (definitely) true, but only of things in virtue of which they are probably true; the notion of absolute truth simply will not apply to such statements.[27]

It is in terms of such inductive problems that Dummett considers falsification as the central notion in a theory of meaning. Such a falsificationist theory "does not relate the meaning of a sentence directly to the grounds of an assertion made by means of it at all."[28] On the contrary, the content of an assertion is linked with the particular commitment that a speaker has in making the assertion. In this sense an assertion is like a gamble that he or she will not be proved wrong. This has the benefit of providing a speaker with a way to rule out certain states of affairs from obtaining, rather than having to show that something is either 'true' or 'false' given a direct verification. Falsification can, however, be subsumed under verificationism. One simply states that it has, or it has not, been verified that the meaning of a sentence has been falsified.

Apart from the questionable existence of direct verifications of universal statements of physical phenonema, a question can be raised over the notion of verification itself. Unlike the positivists who attempted to reduce metaphysical problems to linguistic confusion in order to eliminate them, Dummett seeks to identify metaphysical problems with language and then use the concept of verification to show the possible meaningfulness of metaphysical issues. A prime example is the Realism issue which, according to Dummett, should be conceived along the following lines:

1. The Realism dispute is the dispute about whether statements have realist (evidence-transcendent) or only verificationist truth-conditions.

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[27] Ibid., p.162.

[28] Michael Dummett, 'What is a Theory of Meaning II?' in G. Evans, J. McDowell (eds), *Truth and Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p.126.

2. The dispute about truth-conditions is the dispute about whether the competent speaker's understanding is realist (evidence-transcendent) or only verificationist.

3. The competent speaker's understanding is only verificationist.

4. Therefore Realism is false.

Underlying the first premise (1) is the idea that we can make sense of the world only through a consideration of the language we use. Adopting the method of "semantic ascent"[29] Dummett holds issues within metaphysics to be concerned with statements within a "disputed class" whose truth or falsity is determined by the particular theory of meaning which underlies their status, rather than seeking to establish the language-independent objectivity of the referents of such statements. Considered in this way a metaphysical thesis is like a metaphor until it can be made literal by means of the underlying theory of meaning. Dummett remarks:

> The metaphysical view -realist or non-realist - that we adopt is, therefore, on this way of looking at the matter, consequent upon the position we take up concerning the theory of meaning, not something to be decided in advance of our selection of that position; to affirm, or deny, the existence of an objective reality described by our statements, and rendering them determinately true or false, is to adopt a picture which accords with one or other conception of the kind of meaning which those statements have, but a picture which has in itself no substance otherwise than as a representation of the given conception of meaning.[30]

Since realism is to be identified with an underlying semantic thesis that considers the concept of 'verification-transcendence' meaningful, and since this semantic thesis, according to Dummett, faces difficulties of principle rather than difficulties of detail, realism has no genuine content apart from considering it as an irresistible representational metaphor.[31]

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[29] W.V.O. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge, The M.I.T. Press, 1960), pp. 270-76.

[30] Michael Dummett, *Elements of Intuitionism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 382-83.

[31] Cf., Michael Dummett, 'What is a Theory of Meaning II?' in G. Evans, J. McDowell (eds), *Truth and Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p.68.

4. Meaning

It is because of these difficulties of principle that Dummett consistently addresses the question of the *point* of language and how the concept of truth, verification, and meaning arises out of it. In addressing this question Dummett develops a line of thought first articulated by Frege. In addition to the conception of meaning as articulated in his distinction between 'sense' and 'reference', it is important to put emphasis upon how a particular meaningful sentence is used. Frege's position here has been developed by Dummett into a theory which assigns to every sentence a sense and a force, such that sets of sentences with the same sense may have differing forces. As a result, sentences differing in force are said to all have one thing in common: a descriptive content, a shared sense which is over and above the words which recur in various sentences. Dummett explains the importance of this distinction through the use of his Martian thought experiment.[32] He imagines a class of Martian observers who have taken an interest in human beings. Apart from the general curiosity that these Martians have concerning general human behaviour, they have an interest in understanding the nature and function of human language. This complex activity is something which the Martians try to interpret but can do so, according to Dummett, only in the light of a particular theory.[33] Dummett argues that these Martians would not accomplish their goal of an adequate analysis of human language if all they knew was the 'Fregean sense' of the words and sentences which make up the language. While Frege's account of sense and reference assigns every sentence to either one of two classes (the class of 'true sentences', and the class of 'false sentences'), it does not specify how such sentences are used in human discourse. What is needed is an additional element for such a theory of meaning to be fully adequate: a theory of assertoric force.

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[32] Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* Second Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981a), pp.295-96.
[33] Ibid., p.295.

The point of Dummett's Martian thought experiment relates to his idea that philosophical questions about meaning are best interpreted as questions about understanding: what would an alien need to understand in order to grasp fully the nature and function of human language? A theory of meaning, then, ought to be able to impart an understanding of the language to its audience. Modest theories of meaning are incapable of doing this since they simply give the interpretation of the language to someone who already understands its primitive concepts. Because 'meaning' is in question, what is needed is not an interpretation of that language which already presupposes what is in question in the first place, but a 'full-blooded' theory which seeks to explain the concepts that are expressed by the primitive terms of the language. Although the impression can be given that full-blooded theories of meaning do not presuppose any concepts at all, this is not so in Dummett's case. A full-blooded theory of meaning is unlike a modest theory in that it functions as more than a translation manual for a language: it attempts to give an account of specific practical abilities which competent speakers of the language exhibit. It is, then, more than a translation manual, and less than an assumption-free explanation of a phenomenon. The point of such an investigation is the analysis of the practical abilities which are assumed at the beginning of any full-blooded theory.

Dummett's central claim here is that someone who knows what conditions must hold for a given sentence to be true does not yet know all that he needs to know in order to grasp the significance of the assertion of that sentence. What must be made explicit here is the relation between the truth-conditons of the sentence and the actual character of the linguistic act effected by asserting it: only in this way will the whole use of the sentence be derivable from the statement of its initial truth-conditions. In order to account for this Dummett structures his theory of meaning around two distinct parts. The first part, which Dummett calls the theory of sense, has two tasks. First, it specifies the meanings of the sentences in the language (this

theory of reference is the 'core' of the theory), and second, it explains what it is to know the meaning of a sentence (this is pictured as the 'shell' which is around the 'core'). The second part is the supplementary theory of force which determines the significance of various kinds of utterances in the language. Such a theory has three characteristics: it is full-blooded rather than modest; it is atomistic or molecular rather than holistic; and it is rich rather than austere. Dummett adopts the 'full-blooded' approach due to the previously considered problems with the 'translation-model' of Quine's and the similar theory of Davidson's. Dummett admits that the translation-model does have the advantage of clarity: "we know exactly what form a translation manual has to take, namely an effective set of rules for mapping sentences of the translated language into sentences of the language into which the translation is being made."[34] However, clarity is not enough. Translation theories fail to clarify the concept of meaning because they are usually stated without any direct appeal to this notion. Because translation accounts are indirect in this way, they fail to provide a full description of the fact that to grasp the meaning of an expression is to understand the role it has in the language; as such, an adequate theory of meaning must provide a direct description of this phenomenon if it seeks to remain faithful to the priority of the public use of language. The translation-model fails to directly describe how the language specifically functions since it merely projects the translated language onto another one "whose functioning must, if the translation is to be of practical use, be taken as already known."[35] It follows on such a model that we can know that one sentence translates into another without knowing what either sentence actually means. For example, we might ask a physicist to explain a sentence in Einstein's special theory, and he may tell us; and by the nodding of approval by other physicists who are present we might know that

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[34] Michael Dummett, 'What is a Theory of Meaning I? in Samuel Guttenplan (ed), *Mind and Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.98.
[35] Ibid., p.103.

this is a correct translation, despite the fact that we still do not know what the sentence *means* .[36]

The same can be said for Davidson's theory since it seeks to provide an understanding of the object-language only by means of a grasp of the concepts that are expressed by its primitive expressions. Such expressions are not explained but presupposed as known. It therefore fails to provide a direct display of what an understanding of the object-language consists. For Davidson what plays the role of grasping the meanings of the words in our language is the axioms of the meta-language which govern them. But our desire is to know the meanings of the individual words within the meta-language, and this is not given, and not seen as necessary, in Davidson's account. Dummett remarks:

> There is thus no possibility of holding that an understanding of the component words of a sentence consists just in an awareness of the truth of the axioms governing them: one would have to know the propositions expressed by those axioms. The theory of meaning must therefore be capable of explaining what differentiates a knowledge of the propositions expressed by those axioms from a mere awareness of their truth.[37]

Davidson's theory merely exhibits what it is to arrive at an interpretation of one language through a prior understanding of another, and this is just what a translation-model does. Dummett argues that Davidson's model fails to explain what it is to know a language apart from a knowledge of another. It is because Dummett thinks that an adequate theory of meaning must presuppose as little as possible that he thinks it must be full-blooded. Our theorizing about meaning must contribute toward the explanation of new concepts to those who do not already have them (Martians).

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[36] As Russell once put it: "Everybody knows that Einstein did something astonishing, but very few people know exactly what it was"; *ABC of Relativity* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1986), p.9.
[37] Michael Dummett, 'What is a Theory of Meaning I? in Samuel Guttenplan (ed), *Mind and Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp.112-13.

Dummett argues further that any adequate theory of meaning must be able to give a proper account of the difference between the conditions under which a sentence is held to be true and the conditions for its truth. While the goal is to seek the best possible fit between these two conditions, it is not a perfect fit. At this point we can follow Quine's suspicion about the very legitimacy of the distinction, or try to make it as clear as possible given the constraints of fit. Davidson follows Quine and argues that a speaker's understanding of a sentence cannot be judged except in relation to his use and understanding of the entire language.[38] But on this account the notion of 'correct use' cannot be given a strict formulation since it denies in principle the viability of the distinction between disagreements over meaning and disagreements about the facts. It cannot account for the possibility of a disagreement over a truth-value of a sentence to occur even when there is an agreement over its meaning. While this distinction is blurred in natural language, it still accounts for something that is acknowledged as existing in the practice of our language: being familiar with the idea that someone may assign a determinate meaning to a sentence and nevertheless wrongly judge it to be true. Dummett remarks:

A disagreement between individual speakers of the same language at the same time either cannot be accounted for at all [on Davidson's theory], or should be explained by attributing to them divergent theories of truth for the language: and the same applies to a change of mind on the part of the individual. If the latter course is taken, we lose the conception of the linguistic community: a language, considered as determined by a theory of meaning, becomes something spoken by a single individual at a certain period.[39]

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[38] Davidson denies that the distinction in question obtains given his commitment to theoretical indeterminacy and inscrutability. Two speakers might have radically different propositional knowledge concerning a sentence, but if both are commited to act upon what they each take to be the content of the sentence, and if this turns into a situation where both speakers perform actions which both agree are appropriate, then the distinction in question becomes irrelevant. It is on this understanding, I think, of Davidson's commitment to indeterminacy and inscrutability that his recent talk about there being no "language" is based. At bottom what matters for Davidson is "action", not "language".

[39] Michael Dummett, 'What is a Theory of Meaning I? in Samuel Guttenplan (ed), *Mind and Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

On the other hand a molecular view of language enables a clear content to be given to an individual's associating a meaning with a sentence, a meaning which determines when that sentence may rightly be judged to be true both by this individual as well as others. Now the reason why sentences are intelligible to different speakers in the language is because their meanings are derived compositionally from their constituents and each speaker is privy to the various meanings of these constituents. What this presupposes is that the individual constituents in fact have the same meaning for both speaker and hearer. If by an incremental procedure I am able to understand someone's own language (to the extent that I can), it is because the actual content of the language is determined by the contents of the constituent sentences, along with the individual words which make up the sentences. This means that learning a language is possible by the incremental process of coming to know the meanings of the constituent sentences which make up the language. The implications of holism, however, indicate that one cannot understand the language in question unless that individual learns practically all of it. The question that naturally presents itself here concerns how we could ever, in fact, learn the language. Given the apparent impossibility of such a task Dummet, following his reading of Frege, argues that an essentially public language can be learned by its various speakers only to the extent that partial consensus in usage does not require perfect consensus of usage.[40] Therefore on a molecular view only a large section of the language, not the language in its entirety, need be publically known. This, in turn, provides us with the basis for determining when a particular judgment is mistaken in its representation of the facts: when the proposition is not verified in our experience.

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[40] Cf., Jerry Fodor, Ernest LePore, *Holism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), pp. 8-10.

Insofar as 'richness' is concerned, Dummett argues that a theory of meaning will attribute to any speaker who knows what a proper name means some knowledge of the conditions which must obtain by any object which so bears that name, or a least a capacity to recognise the bearer of the name when it is encountered. To understand 'Germany', for example, we must be able to give a description of Germany, or at least recognise it when we are there. An austere theory like Kripke's, on the other hand, simply stipulates that our naming of anything should only be continuous with previous names we have stipulated without any need to speak of the actual sense of the names previously used. Kripke argues that a name can be said to refer to an object if there exists a chain of communication which goes back to the introduction of the name as originally standing for that object. The reference obtains now because at each successive stage there was a successful intention to preserve its reference. There is, however, no such guarantee that through this chain of communication reference has been preserved. It is entirely possible that the reference has been transferred, that semantic-drift has taken place. Without recognizing the sense of names Kripke has no basis for how a shift in reference in the chain of communication may occur if it does in fact occur.

Dummett points out that when one takes a deeper look into Frege's semantics one will find two arguments which show the inadequacy of maintaining, with Kripke, that to grasp the meaning of an expression is entirely equated with knowing its reference. Dummett's reconstruction of Frege's first argument consists of two premises: (1) that every piece of predicative knowledge ultimately rests upon some piece of propositional knowledge, and (2) that for a given piece of predicative knowledge, there will never be a unique proposition that, when known by a user of the language, will imply the actual possession of that piece of predicative knowledge. Dummett explains the implications of this:

It follows from these two premises that there can be no such thing as a bare knowledge of the reference of a word, since the ascription of a given piece of predicative knowledge will never completely characterise the knowledge which the subject has: this can always be further characterised by citing the particular proposition on his knowledge of which his having that piece of predicative knowledge rests, and, when the knowledge is knowledge of the reference of a word, that further characterisation displays the sense which the speaker attaches to the word.[41]

Dummett remarks that of the two premises the second (2) is more uncertain than the first (1) given the unclarity of the notion of predicative knowledge. Thus it is questionable to maintain that knowing a particular proposition, while determining a possible referent, will not imply that one implicitly has knowledge of the actual referent of a sentence. Given this questionable premise members of the Davidsonian school seek to conflate 'knowledge-what' with 'knowledge-that', that is, they seek to "conflate knowing the reference of a word with knowing that it has a reference."[42] In this sense 'knowledge-what' is knowing the possible reference of a word, while 'knowledge-that' is knowing that a word actually has a reference. Dummett suggests that the way to counter this conflation is to make a further distinction betwen (i) knowing the truth of a statement, and (ii) knowing the proposition expressed by a statement. Dummett says:

Our hypothetical objector to Frege's argument cannot deny that there is something associated with a name [eg. 'Germany'] which the subject must grasp [before-hand] if he is to be credited with knowledge of the proposition expressed by a sentence in which the name is used, without losing the distinction, for such a sentence, between knowing that proposition and knowing the sentence to be true; if he loses this, he is without defence against the charge that he has confused knowing the reference of a name with knowing that it has a reference. That which the subject must grasp is, precisely, the sense of the name.[43]

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[41] Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.126.
[42] Ibid., p.127.
[43] Ibid., p.128.

But Dummett rightly states that even if we grant the conflation between propositional and predicative knowledge, the Davidsonian school still must provide an explanation of what it would be to possess predicative knowledge without invoking the concept of propositional knowledge. And the apparent impossibility of such a accomplishment was the basis upon which the first premise of Dummett's first argument was formed.

To maintain such a Davidsonian position is to misunderstand what Dummett takes to be the purpose of a theory of meaning. He thinks that the essence of such a theory is to provide a theoretical representation of a practical ability, i.e., to represent 'knowledge-how' by 'knowledge-that'. In order to unpack what Dummett means by 'knowledge-that' we must place emphasis upon the supposed inherent ability we all possess to so recognise when, in fact, we know that an expression has a reference. "Our understanding of the word 'red'", says Dummett, "depends on our ability to recognise something as red; we cannot answer the question how we recognise it."[44] In this sense 'how' or 'by what means' are secondary considerations (but once we explicate this recognitional capacity of ours it would then be possible to discuss the 'how' and the 'by what means'; the important point here is not to rearrange the epistemic priority of these various aspects within the theory).

How is this recognitional capacity related to the issue of the central notion in a theory of meaning? Dummett attacks the idea that the meaning of a sentence is to be identified with its classical truth-conditions. He does not say that this idea is definitely wrong; in fact, he suggests that positing truth as the central notion in a theory of meaning is a step to elucidation.[45] It is, however, only a small step: what still remains elusive is the notion of a truth-condition itself, and according to

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[44] Ibid., p.129.

[45] Cf., Michael Dummett, 'What is a Theory of Meaning II?' in G. Evans, J. McDowell (eds), *Truth and Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p.69.

Dummett it is only by considering this recognitional capacity of ours that the notion of 'truth' in a 'truth-condition' can be explained.

As classically formulated a truth-conditional semantics has two distinct elements:

(i) a truth-condition either obtains or does not obtain.

(ii) a truth-condition may obtain although we are not able, even in principle, to put ourselves into a position where we can recognize that it obtains.

It is this second, negative, principle that, for Dummett, gives rise to various difficulties. Dummett remarks that as long as we take 'truth' for granted it seems obvious that this will be the central notion given our natural tendency to take a realist interpretation for all the statements in our language. Once we begin to question this tendency, its apparent obviousness evaporates; in particular, the problems arise when we consider the question of what it is to know the truth-conditions of a sentence. The problems can be reduced to the following: (1) to understand a sentence we need to know how its meaning is derived from its constituent words, and simply stating the truth-conditions of the sentence does not help to do this; (2) we can understand a sentence without being able to state its truth-conditions. When we state truth-conditions we are, presumably, uttering sentences with sense; therefore, unless we already understand the sense of some sentences the process of stating truth-conditions could never get off the ground; and, most importantly, (3) to know a truth-condition of a sentence is to be capable of recognising, in a finite amount of time, when it in fact obtains. This presupposes that a person can perform the practical procedure of putting himself into a position to discover when the condition does obtain; it is on account of this that we can attribute to the person an implicit knowledge of what establishes a sentence to be true.

There is, however, a large number of sentences within our language concerning which we have no effective procedure for deciding their truth-value. Dummett mentions that there are three features of our language that can be singled out as responsible for the occurrence of such sentences: our capacity to refer to inaccessible regions of space-time (cf. the past), our use of unbounded quantification over infinite totalities (cf. quantification over the totality of natural numbers), and our use of the subjunctive conditional (cf. 'If Dummett were to meet Dole, he would either speak politely to him, or insult him').[46]

Take, for example, the following sentence 'X is good at learning languages', said of someone who has never in fact been introduced to a foreign language (and never will be). About this sentence we can answer the question 'Must this statement be either truth or false?' in one of three ways: first, we can argue that it is not necessarily either; second, we can say that one's linguistic ability must consist in some feature of brain structure not at present known to us; thus this statement is either true or false independent of our knowledge of it given this structure. And third, we can dispense with the physiological explanation of the previous remark but still say that, in what ever way, the person either has the ability or not. The main difference between these three responses to the question concerns the principle of bivalence: while the second and the third differ over the particulars of the ability in question, they do agree that it must be either true or false that he has it. The first drops the principle of bivalence for sentences which we do not have an effective procedure for determining their truth-value and hence denies, in this instance, a realist view concerning human abilities. Dummett remarks:

[W]henever the condition for the truth of a sentence is one that we have no way of bringing ourselves to recognize as obtaining whenever it obtains, it seems plain that there is no content to an ascription of an implicit knowledge of what that condition

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[46] Cf., Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.315.

is, since there is no practical ability by means of which such a knowledge may be manifested.[47]

These undecidable sentences are troublesome because they violate what would otherwise be seen as a sound principle: if a statement is true, it must be in principle possible to know that it is true. The truth-conditional response to how such sentences can be said to make sense is that we can counterfactually posit something like a superhuman observer whose observational and intellectual powers transcend our own. To take this seriously is to deceive ourselves, however, and to misunderstand the actual constraints that are present in human enquiry. Dummett explains:

> Even the realist will concede that the picture of the required superhuman powers must always bear a recognizable relation to the powers which we in fact possess; they must be analogous to, or an extension of, our actual powers. It is precisely for this reason that the thesis that counterfactuals cannot be barely true is so compelling, since we cannot form any conception of what a faculty for direct recognition of counterfactual reality would be like.[48]

All of this is generated by Dummett's insistence that an essential part of a theory of sense is to state how a speaker's knowledge of the meaning of a sentence is actually manifested in our behaviour. This requirement cannot be met by undecidable sentences, and therefore they cannot be said to be true (or false) independently of our ability to recognise whether they are such. What is it to grasp, for example, the concept of 'square'? Dummett suggests that at the very least it is to be able to differentiate between things that are square from those that are not. Someone can be said to have this ability only by manifesting it in situations where she actually

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[47] Michael Dummett, 'What is a Theory of Meaning II?' in G. Evans, J. McDowell (eds), *Truth and Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p.82.
[48] Ibid., p.100.

applies the word 'square' to things that are square and not to other things that have a different shape.

While this move toward manifesting linguistic behaviour can rightly be construed as avoiding the kind of psychologism that Frege tried to avoid, it might be charged that Dummett's semantic anti-realism is purchased only at the cost of falling into some kind of behaviourism. To conclude this would be to focus undue attention upon the extent to which Dummett is relying upon, and is responding to, Frege's critique of psychologism. However, Dummett's simultaneous reliance upon Wittgenstein's later writings helps him to avoid the problems of behaviourism since Wittgenstein himself, while avoiding any explanatory talk about how it is that we are guided in our use of language, nevertheless admits that in order to explain the importance of concepts in our use of language mention must be made of "extremely general facts of nature: such facts as are hardly ever mentioned because of their great generality."[49] For example, while Wittgenstein stressed that a mathematical theorem was not inherently necessary apart from someone actually proving it, nevertheless once such a proof was provided we could not fail to accept it. Our acceptance of such proofs is not based upon a particular training in mathematics, but is based upon something extremely general within nature itself (of which we, as humans, are a part). It is this which allows us, as Ian Hacking puts it, to "prove a little."[50] In the same way, we are able to use, for example, the concept of 'square' correctly because there is something in us that allows us to "speak a little", and is the very precondition for our engaging in such a skill as speaking a language in the first place.

With Dummett's use of both Frege and Wittgenstein in mind it can be said that his semantic anti-realism forges a path between behaviourism and

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[49] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), I: p.56e.
[50] Ian Hacking, *Why Does Language Matter To Philosophy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.69.

psychologism.[51] Behaviourism is avoided because those who participate in linguistic practice rely upon their shared knowledge of the theory of meaning for that language, knowledge which shows itself through being manifested in practical abilities and shows itself through an ability to acknowledge a correct formulation of what is known when it is presented. Psychologism is avoided because this implicit knowledge is always manifested in linguistic activity with no appeal being made to 'meaning' apart from such behaviour. Implicit knowledge, therefore, both guides our linguistic behaviour, and is manifested in that behaviour.

5. Summary

Dummett's full-blooded theory of meaning is best understood as a direct response to the problems associated with classical truth-conditional theories of meaning. Such theories of meaning fail to consider that the concept of truth arises out of the practice of trying to make correct assertions. By focusing attention upon the practice of how language is used Dummett can be said to provide a more thorough representation of language than those theories which neglect such practice. This stress upon practice comes from Dummett's own understanding and appropriation of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. It is to this aspect of Dummett's philosophy of language that we now turn.

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[51] Cf., John McDowell, 'In Defence of Modesty', in Barry Taylor (ed.), *Michael Dummett: Contributions to Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), pp.64-65.

Chapter Three
The Need for a Theory of Meaning

Dummett thinks that Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing can rightly be interpreted as implying that a theory of sense is mute: sense only shows itself through our speech behaviour, it can never be stated in a theory. In turn, philosophy must never criticise for the purpose of providing an explanation. It can only describe.

Dummett argues, however, that this descriptive approach of Wittgenstein's is not free from meaning-theoretic assumptions. In fact, Dummett thinks that Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy rests upon "a quite definite conception of what meaning consists in and, consequently, how it is to be characterised."[1] Wittgenstein employed a philosophical methodology, therefore, which rests upon general ideas about meaning, ideas which can be justified only by a sketch of a theory of meaning in terms of those very ideas.[2]

Dummett's work in the philosophy of language, therefore, is based upon the belief that a perspicuous representation of language can only be achieved through such a sketch of a theory of meaning. This, however, is only the first step. Such a theory must also show, Dummett thinks, that it can by-pass the negative implications of Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing. What makes Dummett's own theory of meaning significant here is that it attempts to do just that. A theory of meaning is *not* mute if such a theory is epistemological: a theory about how we grasp sense.

If we assume that Dummett is successful in this approach, what does this imply, for Dummett, about Wittgenstein's importance for the analytical tradition?

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[1] Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.164.
[2] Cf., Ibid., p.166.

Dummett thinks that Wittgenstein's philosophical remarks are insightful, but they do not necessarily call into question Dummett's Fregean-inspired idea of a theory of meaning as a theory of understanding. Dummett argues that Wittgenstein's importance for analytic philosophy is piece-meal: it turns upon his acceptance and/or rejection of ideas that are originally found in Frege's philosophy. The first two sections of this chapter discuss this claim. The third section examines the argument upon which this claim rests.

I. The Debt to Frege

Dummett first thought of himself as a follower of Wittgenstein.[3] The philosophical climate at Oxford during Dummett's undergraduate years in the late 1940s might have contributed toward this characterization of himself. Wittgenstein had returned to Cambridge. His influence made its way to Oxford in typescript, eventually to be published as the *Blue Book* and the *Brown Book* .[4] A few years later the *Philosophical Investigations* was published posthumously. This situation helped to "inoculate [Dummett] against the influence of Austin."[5] Dummett explains:

> [A]lthough he [Austin] was himself unquestionably a clever man, I always thought that the effect of his work on others was largely harmful, and therefore regretted the nearly absolute domination that for a time he exercised over Oxford philosophy.[6]

Apart from Austin, the other dominant philosophical figure was that of Ryle, who taught that the *enemy* of philosophy was not the early Heidegger of *Being and*

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[3] Cf., Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,1978), p. xii.
[4] Cf., Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 168-9.
[5] Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.xii.
[6] Ibid., p.xii.

Time , but the early and middle Carnap of *The Logical Structure of the World* and *The Logical Syntax of Language* . Ryle thought that Carnap was the embodiment of philosophical error, whose writings represented a wholly false philosophical methodology.[7] Dummett came to view Carnap from a more positive perspective, however:

> Of course, the Carnap whom Ryle taught us to reject was a caricature of the real Carnap; but so strong was this prejudice, that it took me, for one, many years to realise that there is much worthy of study in Carnap's writings.[8]

This late appreciation of Carnap can most likely be related to Dummett's reading of Frege's *The Foundations of Arithmetic* for a paper that he had chosen to do for Austin as an undergraduate.[9] As Dummett says, he was "absolutely bowled over by it"; that he "had never read anything of that quality in [his] entire life."[10] This initial exposure to Frege, an exposure which made Dummett decide that he "had to read everything that this man had written,"[11] was clearly the corrective turning-point away from his initial characterization of himself as a disciple of Wittgenstein.

But Dummett did not totally disregard Wittgenstein's ideas. He eventually retained those ideas that, he believed, originated in Frege's work.[12] In particular: the

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[7] Cf., Ibid., p.437.

[8] Ibid., p. 437.

[9] Dummett's reading of Frege as a precursor of modern semantics is not only related to his appreciation of *Grundlagen*, but also related to Frege's semantic ideas as appropriated by Carnap in his 1947 study of semantics and modal logic, *Meaning and Necessity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988). In this work Carnap presents a detailed account of Frege's semantic doctrines and treats them as a special version of the compositional theory of meaning that he was developing in relation to Tarski. So, while Frege provided Dummett with an initial appreciation for semantics, Carnap, it seems, certainly has a place in directing his thoughts in this direction as well. When Dummett speaks of that in Carnap's philosophy that "is much worthy of study" it most likely relates to his reading and approproation of Frege's ideas, among other things. Cf., Hans Sluga, *Gottlob Frege* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 181.

[10] Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,1994), p. 169.

[11] Ibid., p. 169.

[12] Apart from the ideas in Wittgenstein's work that elaborates, builds upon, and complements those of Frege's, Dummett is of the opinion that Wittgenstein is "at his worst", and "seldom succeed[s] in

criterion of identity, Frege's stress upon the objective character of thought, and his ideas on the function and limits of language. For Dummett these ideas are among those that are the most valuable in Wittgenstein's work and the most useful for Dummett's theory of meaning.

1. Criteria of Identity

Frege states the doctrine of criteria of identity in §62 of *Grundlagen* as follows: "If we are to use the symbol *a* to signify an object, we must have a criterion for deciding in all cases whether *b* is the same as *a* , even if it is not always in our power to apply this criterion."[13] The principle that Frege presents in this section is entirely general. It's purpose is to determine the truth conditions of identity statements. Frege applied this principle to terms for self-subsistent abstract objects like 'the number of *F* s' and 'the direction of *a* '. In §56 and §62 Frege explains that a prime characteristic of a self-subsistent object is that we are able to recognise it as the same again. For Frege 'object' is correlative with 'proper name', so he regards it as a characteristic of the sense of a proper name that this sense supplies us with a way to re-identify an object as the actual referent of that name. What makes this of general philosophical interest is that the scope of this procedure is not restricted to the philosophy of mathematics, but is presented as a procedure that can be applicable to a wide range of cases.

Dummett maintains that while Frege worked out the implications of this principle for terms denoting abstract objects, it was left to Wittgenstein to apply the principle "that the understanding of a singular term involves the apprehension of an appropriate criterion of identity to terms of other sorts, including for what would

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framing cogent arguments to show that Frege was wrong". On this, and for an exposition of the issues that are dealt with in the next number of pages, cf. Michael Dummett, 'Frege and Wittgenstein' in Irving Block (ed.), *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1981).

[13] Gottlob Frege, *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetic*, Breslau, 1884; bilingual edn., *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, with German and English on facing pages, trans. J.L. Austin, second revised edn., (Oxford, 1978).

ordinarily be thought of as concrete objects."[14] This criterion of Frege's, understood as a kind of contextual definition, is not precisely the one Wittgenstein advocates in the *Philosophical Investigations* , but it could be seen as providing what Dummett calls the *inspiration* for its development in at least the first third of that work.[15]

What differentiates Frege's use of the criterion from Wittgenstein's is that Frege was concerned with those names that stand for objects which cannot be indicated with the use of demonstratives, whereas Wittgenstein was concerned with those names whose referents can be so indicated (hence Wittgenstein's great interest in, and discussion of, ostension in §§27-64 in the *Philosophical Investigations*). Frege's use of the criterion seems to implicitly endorse the distinction between two different kinds of objects, a distinction which differentiates Frege and Wittgenstein on this point. We cannot ostensively *point* at numbers in the process of providing a definition of them, so we must deal with the names of these objects by means of a functional expression (operator). The referents of these names are capable of being referred to through the use of singular terms (names) formed by means of such functional expressions as 'the direction of x' or 'the shape of y'. Frege introduces these operators into the discussion because, for him, it is very hard to know how one could refer to, say, 'directions' or 'shapes' without first having a *means* of referring to them.

Frege's eventual ban on contextual definition in *Grundgesetze* in favor of explicit definition does not, in itself, tell against ascribing to Frege the origin of Wittgenstein's use of criterion of identity in the *Philosophical Investigations* . Dummett argues that Frege eventually opts for the kind of explicit definition which has been called 'definition by abstraction' (definitions in terms of equivalence

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[14] Michael Dummett, 'Frege and Wittgenstein' in Irving Block (ed.), *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1981), p.32.

[15] Cf., Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* Second Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981a), p.578.

classes). This can be taken in either one of two ways: either (i) the notion of such a class is previously known, so that such a definition is explicit in the ordinary sense of explaining the defined terms by means of something that is already understood; or (ii) the notion of such a class is not given in advance, so that 'definition by abstraction' is to be looked upon as simply a representation of the kind of contextual definitions which Frege proposed in *Grundlagen* . But, since Frege conceived of explicit definition in the first sense it seems difficult to make a direct connection between Frege and Wittgenstein on this point. Dummett thinks that the best that can be said about Frege's proposal of contextual definition is that it is a piece of "heuristic advice" which he never followed.[16] With this move to explicit definition the conception of a definition as the stipulation of a criterion of identity faded from Frege's mind. The best that can be said, therefore, concerning Wittgenstein's reliance upon Frege's introduction of this criterion is that Frege provided the *inspiration* for its use in the *Investigations* , and that Frege was ill-advised to reject it in his later work. Dummett wants to put emphasis upon the fact, however, that without Frege's introduction of the concept of criteria of identity in §62 of *Grundlagen* it is questionable whether we would have the kind of discussion of identity found in at least the first third of the *Philosophical Investigations* . A good example of Wittgenstein's use of criteria of identity is found in his discussion of meaning and understanding.

2. Meaning and Understanding

In the process of attempting to dismantle the Augustinian thesis that words are names for objects,[17] Wittgenstein draws a number of diverse, and apparently non-equivalent, links between the concept of meaning and other concepts: meaning is use, meaning is what is given by explanation of meaning, meaning is assertion-

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[16] Cf., Ibid., p.579.

[17] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), I:1-142.

conditions, and meaning is method of verification. From §143 to §184 Wittgenstein begins to draw these links together through an analysis of the concept of understanding. This concept is central to the type of philosophical picture Wittgenstein begins to draw in this section, and to this extent it can rightly be said that for Wittgenstein a theory of meaning is a theory of understanding. The applicability of this slogan for Wittgenstein's work obtains only if we take the term 'theory' as thinly as possible. If understood correctly this slogan conveys the sense that the concept of understanding is connected with meaning (and its various links with other concepts) insofar as it is interpreted as a practical ability with public criteria for its successful execution. The various concepts that Wittgenstein links with meaning serve as the criteria for this activity, and are therefore said to be functionally equivalent to each other. But Wittgenstein stresses that the attempt to derive the *essence* of understanding from this functional family-resemblance would be a mistake:

> Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena [various language-games] have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, - but that they are *related* to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all 'language'. I will try to explain this (PI, §65b).

The constructive end of this explanation begins at §143.

From §143 to §155 Wittgenstein makes use of the example of following an arithmetical rule in order to clarify his position on the nature of understanding. The ability to understand a rule rests upon a particular training and a "brute reaction" to such training.[18] The possibility of this training, and all subsequent training, teaching, and explanation rests upon reacting to it in a 'normal' way (cf.

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[18] Cf., Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), §419: "Any explanation has its foundation in training. (Educators ought to remember this)."

§142). Wittgenstein does, however, make mention of a pupil's capacity to learn as possibly coming to an end if he consistently makes random mistakes in the application of a rule. If the mistakes are systematic (eg., applying a successor function to a series in an incorrect, but consistent, way), then there is the possibility of resuming the training by showing him that the normal way of applying the function is a varient of his. But if there is no discernable pattern to the mistakes he makes one is simply at a loss as to how such a person can be taught the correct application of a rule.

Now the possibility of imagining that one's ability to learn may cease at a certain point is important to consider because it contributes towards the type of general reorientation of our conception of language, meaning, and understanding that Wittgenstein is after. That we have certain fundamental abilities seems to be a general fact of nature (there is something in us that allows us to follow rules), and which contributes toward our use of language. This seems to be the point of the footnote on p.56e of *Philosophical Investigations* :

> What we have to mention in order to explain the significance, I mean the importance, of a concept, are often extremely general facts of nature: such facts as are hardly ever mentioned because of their great generality.

How do we explain the difference between someone who either understands how to apply a rule or misunderstands such an application but is able to be taught the correct use, on the one hand, and someone who does not understand at all, on the other? What does the knowledge of "being able to go on" consist in? Wittgenstein makes mention of someone trying to find an answer to this question by describing the understanding we have as a "state of mind", a "reservoir", which is the source of correct use. This notion, however, is extremely unclear. If this reservoir model is correct then there must be two different criteria for its attribution:

the actual structure of this mental reservoir and its exercise. But Wittgenstein argues that it is only the latter that provides the criterion for knowing and understanding, not the former. We know next to nothing of the former, and the knowledge that we do have is neurological not grammatical. Wittgenstein suggests, therefore, that it is best to see the grammar of the word 'knows' as being closely related to that of 'understands'. And since the word 'knows' is related to that of 'can' and 'is able to', the concept of understanding should be regarded as a particular ability or technique (cf. §150). Thus, when we use the word 'know' in the sense of "now I can go on" or "now I can do it", we ought not to focus attention upon the various mental processes which are characteristic of understanding. This is so precisely because "understanding is not a mental process" (§154d). What justifies someone saying that he understands how to apply a rule correctly is the actual circumstances of such a practice, not the incidental experiences he either does or does not have when in these circumstances:

> Think of children putting up their hands in class when they know the answer to a question. Must one of them have said the answer silently to himself, for putting up his hand to make sense? *What* must have gone on in him for this? - Nothing. But it is important that he ordinarly *gives* an answer when he has put up his hand; and that is the criterion for his *understanding* putting up one's hand.[19]

Dummett thinks that what makes this insight a significant contribution to Frege's work is that it provides a solution to an intractable problem that he faced in his attack against idealistic philosophy: the problem of psychologism.[20]

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[19] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, Vol. I.* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), §245.

[20] "Idealism is by its very nature more prone to slip into psychologism, although the possibility of a viable idealistic theory of meaning depends precisely upon the possibility of resisting this temptation. But in any case, in Frege's day the kind of idealism that was everywhere prevalent in the philosophical schools was infected with psychologism through and through: it was not until it had been decisively overthrown that it became possible to envisage a non-psychologistic version of idealism. (Indeed, it is not even yet certain that such a version is possible. Brouwer's writings are steeped in psychologism: the faith that intuitionism is a tenable philosophy of mathematics involves

It is Dummett's contention that Frege's great philosophical legacy is first given expression in §62 of *Grundlagen* where Frege tries to fix the sense of numerical identity in order to obtain the concept of Number.[21] In answer to the question, "How, then, are numbers given to us, if we cannot have any ideas or intuitions of them?", Frege says the following: "Since it is only in the context of a proposition that words have any meaning, our problem becomes this: To define the sense of a proposition in which a number word occurs." While this methodological move has become, through the writings of such influential figures as Russell, Wittgenstein, Carnap, and Quine, the fundamental tenet of analytic philosophy, Dummett makes the important observation that this strategy was not simply a product of Frege's philosophical genius. It was influenced by a fundamental conception which he shared with other German philosophers of his day: the extrusion of thoughts from the mind.[22]

Frege made a distinction between 'thought' and 'idea'. While an 'idea' is something that remains a subjective component of the mind and essentially incommunicable, a 'thought' is something totally objective and can be communicated to another person without subjective residue. 'Thoughts', therefore, are common and accessible to all because they are objective to all. On Frege's view 'thoughts and other senses' form a distinct "third realm" of timeless and immutable entities which exist independantly of our grasp or expression of them. This follows from Frege's insistence in *Grundlagen* that the 'logical' and the 'psychological'

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the faith that it is possible to purge it of its psychologistic form. But, at least, thanks to Frege's onslaught on psychologism, we are able to formulate what is required). Hence it was almost certainly a historical necessity that the revolution which made the theory of meaning the foundation of philosophy should be accomplished by someone like Frege who had for idealism not an iota of sympathy." Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* Second Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981a), p.684. For a critical evaluation of this historical thesis see Hans Sluga, *Gottlob Frege* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

[21] Cf., Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 5.

[22] Ibid., p.22. Dummett mentions Bolzano, Frege, Meinong, and Husserl as those German philosophers who contributed toward this fundamental conception of the non-mental character of thought.

must be entirely distinct. For Frege there is no intermediate category of the intersubjective. As Dummett puts it: "whatever is common to all must be independent of any."[23] This means that if 'thoughts' are not contents that can be characterised as *mental* , then their analysis should not be conducted in terms of mental operations. Psychologism must be rejected.

Frege does concede that grasping a 'thought' is still a mental act. This leads to the following problem. 'Thoughts', and their senses, are independent of the mind, but grasping a 'thought' is still a mental act. It is something that belongs to the realm of the psychological. According to Dummett this is where Wittgenstein's denial that understanding is a mental process is of vital importance. It legitimizes and extends Frege's stress upon the objective character of all thought. Within the framework that Frege worked out his anti-psychologism this problem of grasping a 'thought' remained. Wittgenstein, consistently following through with the logical implications of Frege's anti-psychologicism, provided the solution.

3. The Function and Limits of Language

Despite its apparent absence the distinction between saying and showing is one of the two fundamental assumptions at the foundation of Wittgenstein's philosophy.[24] Dummett thinks that what makes this of interest for Frege's work is that it provides a way to clarify, to a greater extent than was possible for Frege, the important distinction between concepts and objects, as well as providing a way to

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[23] Ibid., p. 23.

[24]The second assumption is that whatever can be said, can be done so with *complete* clarity. These two assumptions make up what Ackermann calls Wittgenstein's one-step hermeneutics: "The meaning of a sentence, if it is a meaningful sentence, can be completely determined by reference to some appropriate fixed horizon of meaning, and the oscillations of hermeneutical theory are then short-circuited. The meaning is given directly because the relevant horizon is immanent in the language that we already speak. Once the appropriate horizon for the sentence is located, the precise meaning is also known...Without recognition of this hermeneutical scheme, Wittgenstein's total remarks on linguistic understanding and our ability to control language cannot fit together without revealing serious breaks and strains"; Robert John Ackermann, *Wittgenstein's City* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), pp. 18-19. The "relevant [hermeneutical] horizon" is *shown* in the language that we speak, thus allowing us to know the precise meaning of a sentence in question, that is, allowing us to *say* and understand the sentence with *complete clarity*.

expound, without inconsistency, the notion that sense determines reference. First, consider the distinction between concepts and objects. For Frege numbers are objects and are therefore capable of having identity predicated of them. This is not so in the case of concepts. Why is this the case, and how are we to distinguish between concepts and objects? Dummett thinks that Frege's solution to the apparent conflict concerning his distinction between concept and object, and the seemingly self-evident fact that we can, in fact, assert identity not only of objects but of concepts,[25] is given a first approximation in Frege's essay 'On Concept and Object.' It is here that Frege says that once we produce a definite description of a concept we have, as Frege puts it in *Grundlagen* , fundamentally altered the concept by turning it into an object. For Frege it is substantives (names), expressions with definite articles, that stand for independently fixed objects about which we can make statements of identity. So, 'the concept horse' refers not to a concept but to an object (despite the seeming fact that we are speaking about a particular concept under which certain objects fall). In order to clarify this apparently paradoxical doctrine Frege provides us with a series of descriptive metaphors. We have Frege's *adhesive metaphors* : (i) one object cannot, logically speaking, be said to stick to another object without having some kind of cement which itself cannot be an object; and (ii) that concepts need something to which they can adhere to objects (similar to the distinction in traditional metaphysics between substance and accident). We also have Frege's famous *chemical metaphor* : an unsaturated solution can, in fact, be saturated but must be so saturated by something which is itself not an unsaturated solution.

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[25] It seems reasonable to assume that the following assertion of identity can be made: the concept 'human' is different from the concept 'man'. Frege's connection of concepts with functions allows him to ultimately speak of the relation of identity of concepts despite the fact that this relation is only thinkable of objects. The relation of concepts is a second-level one which obtains when everything that falls under one concept also falls under the second. If this relation obtains then it can be said, in a roundabout way, that the actual extensions of these two concepts are the same.

That Frege has to make use of metaphorical expressions in order to clarify the distinction between concepts and objects does not indicate that the distinction, at least for Frege, is ultimately exhausted by these expressions. If this distinction is to be considered as a fundamental principle of Frege's logic, then there must be some non-metaphorical substance to it. Frege's idea, which he articulates in his essay 'Function and Concept', that concepts are to be seen as functions, seems to provide the needed non-metaphorical substance. With the connection between concepts and functions at hand, Frege is able to make more explicit his ideas that concepts are incomplete, that we cannot make identity statements of them, and that concepts must be distinguished from abstract objects (numbers).

Frege argues in 'Function and Concept' that a function is not to be taken as a sign for something else. A function is to be taken as what a sign signifies. What had formally been called a function is now called a *functional expression* , and a sharp distinction is made between *names* (which stand for objects) and *functional expressions* (which stand for functions). Frege's readiness in this essay to move from names, to functional expressions, and then to what those expressions stand for, is based upon the following idea. If the distinction between complete and incomplete expressions is necessary, and therefore fruitful, for logic, then it must represent something real or objective. Consider the follow remarks by Frege on judgments:

> One speaks of affirmative and negative judgments. Even Kant does that. Translating into my terminology one would distinguish between affirmative and negative thoughts: a distinction which is altogether unnecessary at least as far as logic is concerned. I do not know a single logical law in whose formulation it would be necessary or even advantagious to use this distinction. In every science in which one can speak of lawfulness one must always ask: which technical terms are necessary or at least useful for the precise expression of the laws of that science. What does not withstand this examination is of evil.[26]

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[26] Gottlob Frege, *Kleine Schriften* , ed. I. Angelelli, Hildesheim, 1967, p.369; as quoted in Hans Sluga, *Gottlob Frege* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p.137.

It is important to note that this connection of concepts with functions does not, of itself, explain why the distinction between concepts and objects obtains, but only sets it within a larger context. We now need to ask the question 'What is the substance of the distinction between names and functional expressions?' Behind this distinction lies Frege's observation that we can ultimately divide the words of our language into two classes: one class whose members determine the structure of complex phrases in which they occur, and another class whose members do not. The latter class is, for Frege, the class of names, and the former class is the class of all the words which make up functional expressions. The distinction between these two types of classes is clarified by the following remark of Frege's about functional expressions:

> A functional expression always carries with it empty places for the argument (at least one such place), which in analysis is usually indicated by the letter 'x' which fills the empty places. But the argument must not be considered part of the function and the letter 'x' is therefore also not part of the functional expression. One can therefore always talk of an empty place in the functional expressions in so far as that which fills it does not really belong to the expression. Accordingly I have called the function unsaturated or in need of completion because its name must be supplemented with a sign for an argument in order to obtain a completed reference.[27]

The incompleteness of functions does not, however, mean that they are "static" or "inert". They perform the function of correlating arguments with values within a particular context. So, while it is true that, on their own, functional expressions do not explicitly possess completed reference, nevertheless with Frege we are bound to say that they have *implicit* reference insofar as they are fruitful correlating constituents of our language. However, since functions (concepts) are

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[27] Gottlob Frege, *Nachgelassen Schriften* , ed. H. Hermes et al., Hamburg, 1969, p.129; as quoted in Ibid., p.141.

not seperable from this correlating role which they happen to play in language, it is impossible for us to name them apart from this role without ending up in conceptual confusion. Frege remarks on this that despite the fact that we are, on the natural level, unable to do without expressions like "the concept", we must always be aware of their ultimate logical inappropriateness.

Once we put the definite article in front of a concept we have fundamentally altered the concept by turning it into an object. However, Frege does not, in the essay 'On Concept and Object', tell us what kind of object this alteration produces. He ultimately concludes in a posthumously published paper written shortly after 'On Concept and Object' that such an expression as 'the concept *A* ' does not refer to anything.[28] Frege came to view language as a distorted medium which imposes, with almost inescapable force, an expression which is logically unfitting for the clear articulation of our logical thoughts. In his correspondence with Hilbert on the nature and purpose of symbolism Frege speaks of the "imperspicuous and imprecise character of word language to be an obstacle" for such an articulation, and that a logical symbolism is needed which is more perspicuous and precise.[29] Given these difficulties it is no wonder that, at the natural level, the distinction between concepts and objects can only be clarified through the use of metaphorical expressions: the medium through which such distinctions are talked about is not up to the task.

Dummett thinks that it is natural to see Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing as providing additional help in clarifying what Frege takes pains to describe through the use of his adhesive and chemical metaphors. What Frege tries to say metaphorically about these concepts can supposedly be shown through the functioning of statements in the language. But this does not ultimately

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[28] Cf., Ibid., p.143.

[29] Gottlob Frege, *Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence* , eds. G. Gabriel, H. Hermes, F. Kambartel, C. Thiel, A. Veraart, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), p.33.

get around the paradoxical nature of Frege's problem with concepts. The very idea of logical form showing itself in the functioning of statements is just as unclear and puzzling as what Frege tries to say through the use of metaphor. With Wittgenstein's distinction ready at hand the best that can be done is to try to elucidate, but to never make explicit, logical form. Therefore, if any advance is to be attributed to Wittgenstein's distinction in this particular instance it should be seen as contributing toward the greater clarification of this paradoxical doctrine, rather than toward its resolution. Dummett is of the opinion that what is at the foundation of Wittgenstein's philosophy (both early and late) finds previous expression in Frege's theory of concepts and objects.

Second, Dummett asks us to consider Frege's distinction between sense and reference. We say that sense determines reference, but not that reference determines sense. But when we actually stipulate what the reference of a particular expression is to be, we have thereby determined what its sense is to be. This is where Wittgenstein's distinction comes into play, for, as Dummett says, "in laying down what an expression is to stand for, we 'say' what its reference is, not what its sense is; but, by choosing, as we must, a particular manner of doing this, we 'show' what sense it is to have."[30] Despite the seemingly negative semantic implications of Wittgenstein's distinction, Dummett not only thinks that it clarifies Frege's ideas here, but also maintains that it is, in fact, a requirement for their very articulation. Dummett is of the opinion that if Frege had this distinction at hand when expounding his ideas on sense and reference he would not have left himself open to the charge that he held a description theory of proper names.

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[30] Michael Dummett, 'Frege and Wittgenstein' in Irving Block (ed.), *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1981),p. 32.

4. Initial Objections

This reading of Wittgenstein's ultimate dependance upon Frege for some of the deepest, and most important, ideas in his later work is compelling if, for no other reason, due to its sheer novelty. Alberto Coffa rightly points out that before Dummett began publishing his work on Frege it was somewhat habitual for Wittgensteinians to regard Frege as something of an evil influence on modern philosophy. Frege was considered as someone "who had confused everything by bringing too sharp and narrow a logical mind to deal with the broad, imprecise problems of philosophy."[31] Dummett's work on Frege brought new life back into analytical philosophy since its inception in the 1960's.

But, despite the novelty of this reading of Wittgenstein, it seems unclear whether some of the stronger claims that Dummett makes about Frege's influence on Wittgenstein's philosophy can withstand criticism. For example, Dummett is of the strong opinion that these various elaborations upon Frege's central ideas by Wittgenstein are not only fruitful and legitimate, but consistute the only *true* development of them. Two things can be said here by way of possible criticism.[32] First, Dummett's choice of the particular Fregean ideas which influenced Wittgenstein seem to be chosen in isolation from how they actually function in Frege's philosophy as a whole. These various ideas are fully intelligible only when they are related to the entire body of Frege's work. The same can be said of Wittgenstein. To say that Wittgenstein provides the only true development of Frege's ideas seems to suggest that both Frege and Wittgenstein at least share the same kind of philosophical vision. The isolation of these ideas seems to militate against the kind of reading Dummett tries to present.

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[31] Alberto Coffa, *The Semantic Tradition From Kant to Carnap: To the Vienna Station* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.218.

[32] Cf., Gordon Baker, *Wittgenstein, Frege, and the Vienna Circle* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp.162-3.

Second, if Frege and Wittgenstein turn out to be less compatible than one might believe, that, in fact, they do not share the same kind of philosophical vision, then it is unclear how to make sense of Dummett's position on Wittgenstein's development of Frege's ideas. This is the problem that Gordon Baker has with this line of interpretation. In response Baker concludes that the only thing that can be said about someone, like Dummett, who finds "anticipations of Wittgenstein's insights in Frege's writings is [that they have] probably [been] taken in by superficial appearances."[33]

Such criticisms, interesting in their own right, seem to miss the mark when made against Dummett's understanding of the relation between Frege and Wittgenstein. Dummett is fully aware of the fact that Wittgenstein does not share Frege's philosophical vision:

> [The] differences between [Frege and Wittgenstein] are not just a matter of style, or of passing remarks, or of disagreements over inessentials: many of Wittgenstein's most fundamental ideas concerning meaning are irreconcilable with those of Frege.[34]

Dummett is not misled by "superficial appearances." On the contrary, Dummett's selective use of Wittgenstein's ideas is guided by the recognition of this fundamental difference. This recognition is the basis for Dummett's expositional principle that those ideas which find their origin in Frege's work are to be considered as worthy of philosophical consideration irrespective of how they actually fit into Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Other ideas in Wittgenstein's philosophy that are "irreconcilable with those of Frege" are misguided and

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[33] Here is what Baker says in a footnote about Dummett: "If substantiated in detail, this general point [about the actual dissimilarities between Frege and Wittgenstein] would constitute a serious indictment of Michael Dummett's strategy in interpreting Frege's philosophy. He reads many of Frege's theses as anticipations of the *Tractatus* or of the *Philosophical Investigations* ." Ibid. p.163.

[34] Michael Dummett, 'Frege and Wittgenstein' in Irving Block (ed.), *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1981), p.35.

problematic precisely because they depart from Frege's general outlook. It is this persistent Fregean outlook of Dummett's which influences his interpretation of Wittgenstein's work. But his Fregean interpretation of Wittgenstein is not based upon a naive preference for Frege's philosophy. Dummett argues that when Wittgenstein departs from "the power of Frege's ideas" he is "almost always at his worst" and fails to frame cogent arguments to show that Frege was mistaken. Dummett provides a number of instances where he thinks Wittgenstein's departure from Frege's ideas is mistaken.

II. The Departure of Wittgenstein

1. The Diagram Theory

Consider Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* . Dummett points out that the picture (or *diagram*) theory was a radical modification of Frege's general conception of the nature and function of language. For Frege proper names and sentences are complete, along with what they stand for, namely, objects and truth-values. But, this is not the case with predicates and what they stand for, namely, concepts. A predicate is both semantically and essentially incomplete:

> [A predicate] does not consist just in its having to be understood as standing for something incomplete, a mapping of objects on to truth-values. Rather, it is itself incomplete: it is not just a string of words that can be extracted from the sentence and stand on its own, not even a disconnected string; its occurrence in the sentence depends, in general, upon the occurrence in different places in the sentence of the same proper name. It is, thus, not a detachable bit of the sentence, but a feature that the sentence has in common with certain other sentences.[35]

According to Dummett, if Frege is right in holding sense to be a cognitive notion - that what we grasp when we grasp the sense of a sentence is the condition under

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[35] Ibid., p.35.

which that sentence is true - then Frege is also right in identifying the reference of a sentence with a truth-value (since sense determines reference). As is well known this identification of reference with truth-value led Frege, in his later writings, to assimilate sentences with proper names and to argue that sentences are nothing but complex proper names which refer to particular kinds of abstract objects. How does one avoid the problems which this step of Frege's produces? Dummett thinks that it would be wrong to deny altogether that sentences have reference. For if Frege's conception is at all correct, then it must be possible to provide a compositional account of how sentences are determined to be either true or false. It also does not seem reasonable, given the Fregean way in which sentences are said to be complete, to deny that what a sentence has as a reference is its particular truth-value. If we want to remain within the bounds of Frege's general conception of the nature and function of language, then serious consideration must be given to these problems concerning sense, reference, and the nature of truth-values.

Dummett argues that Wittgenstein's diagram theory should be seen as a brilliant attempt at a solution to these problems. According to Dummett, the key move of Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* is to conceive of a predicate neither as an object, nor as a property of a sentence. We are to conceive of a predicate as a property of the name which appears in its argument-place. Since the predicate will consist in the property of the name, we can conceive of the sentence as the fact that a certain name in its argument-place has a certain property.

Consider the following principle: a linguistic entity within a sentence of a given logical type will stand for an entity of the same logical type. If we abide by this principle, then we can infer that the sentence must represent a fact or a state of affairs (since on Wittgenstein's conception the sentence need not be true). With this move we are then no longer tempted to think "that names and sentences stand for

or represent things of the same logical type."[36] Hence, clarifying the kind of references for sentences considered as complex proper names is no longer considered a problem.

But Dummett argues that this attempt of Wittgenstein's does not work, for a sentence cannot be said to be like a diagram because it individually states only one thing. A picture (or a diagram), on the other hand, is an object which is constituted by many facts. If we know how a diagram represents, then we shall be able to discern which facts in the diagram represent and which ones do not. Dummett elaborates:

> [For] instance, which lines are drawn in black [in the diagram], and which in red, may or may not be significant; and we may well overlook some of these facts although we see the diagram and understand it. The diagram will show, e.g., that the only man in the village with great-grandchildren has a wife older than himself, and also that only the three oldest men in the village have wives older than themselves, and so on; and what shows these different facts are different facts about the diagram, facts not all of which we may notice, and, save with the simplest diagram, some of which we are sure *not* to notice, when we look at the diagram.[37]

Sentences do not function in this way. While a diagram may signify many things, a sentence, though it may imply many things, says the one thing which we know when we hear it expressed in the language we understand. Studying a sentence more closely will not produce the analogous results of studying a diagram: while the study of the diagram may elicit new things previously unknown to you, the study of the sentence will not allow you to elicit new meanings not noticed before. Even if the reply is made that a diagram, unlike a sentence, is an object and not a fact (hence the mistaken attempt at providing an analogy between the sentence and the diagram), nevertheless the problem still remains concerning the role which the diagram plays in representing a particular fact. Since a sentence is said to represent

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[36] Ibid., p.37.
[37] Ibid., p.37.

in the same way that a fact about the diagram does, what is to play the role of the diagram in allowing other facts the possibility of representing? If the names in their argument-places represent facts, or states of affairs, which are composed of objects, then we must consider particular arrangements of these objects of which a particular fact obtains, and which corresponds to the diagram. Dummett argues that the only arrangement this could be is the sentence considered not as a fact but as an object with a certain complexity:

> Thus, if we try to take the picture or diagram theory seriously, we are, after all, forced back on to considering the sentence, once again, as an object; and, since there are not *different* facts about the sentence, as object, which represent different states of affairs, we are forced to conclude that the sentence does not represent as a diagram does, but in a different way altogether.[38]

2. Frege's Critique of Formalism

Another instance where Wittgenstein's criticisms of Frege seem ineffective can be found at the beginning of the *Blue Book* where Frege's criticism of formalism is up for discussion. Frege's criticism concerns the apparent ignorance by the formalists of what Wittgenstein describes as "the life of the mathematical formulas." Wittgenstein characterizes Frege's criticism as follows:

> [W]hat must be added to the dead signs in order to make a live proposition is something immaterial, with properties different from all mere signs.[39]

For Frege what the formalists ignore is the *sense* of the signs. Wittgenstein critically responds to this with something supposedly quite different from Frege: "if we had to name anything which is the life of the sign, we should have to say that it

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[38] Ibid. p.38.

[39] Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1964. *The Blue and Brown Books* . Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), p.4.

was its *use* ".[40] According to Dummett, Wittgenstein's criticism here not only concerns the use of mathematical statements in empirical applications (applied mathematics), but also their general role within a mathematical theory. But to what extent did Frege *not* succeed in giving a general account of this idea? It is true, Dummett remarks, that Frege took sense to be immaterial and to exist independently of our grasp of it; but this does not necessarily rule out certain implications of this notion insofar as an emphasis upon 'meaning is use' is concerned: "[Frege] said a great deal more about that in which [the sense of a sentence] consists, above all, that, in grasping the sense of a sentence, including a mathematical sentence, what we grasp is the condition for that sentence to be true".[41] Taken in this way Frege's conception of sense can be cashed out along the lines of 'use' when we consider that sense for Frege was a cognitive notion; and that grasping the sense of a sentence consists partly in the way we use that sentence. The essence of sense for Frege is that it can be objectively communicable, not only within a particular context, but also from one generation to the next.[42] Its very objectivity allows us to discover when one person attaches a different sense to a word from someone else: such a phenomenon lies entirely open to view. This means that when two people agree upon the sense of a word, what they agree upon are the conditions under which a sentence (which contains the word) turns out to be true. The very objectivity of sense allows the speakers to determine, from what they actually say and do, what should constitute the truth-conditions at issue. While the underlying distinction that is operating here for Frege (the distinction between sense

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[40] Ibid., p.4.

[41] Michael Dummett, 'Frege and Wittgenstein' in Irving Block (ed.), *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1981), p.34.

[42] Gottlob Frege, 'On Sense and Meaning' from *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic, and Philosophy* Brian McGuinness (ed), (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), p.160.

and force) may be problematic,[43] Dummett's general complaint here concerns Wittgenstein's questionable procedure of simply opposing the notion of use to Frege's notion of sense, with the presumed idea that this notion of use was something that Frege failed to consider. It is wrong to argue that Wittgenstein, in voicing this criticism against Frege, had discovered something that was totally alien to Frege's philosophy. In fact a strong case can be made for the idea that Wittgenstein's later conception of 'meaning as use' itself owes something to Frege's idea on the objectivity of sense.[44]

III. Dummett and Wittgenstein's Language-Games

1. Redundancy

Dummett suggests that by far the most "radical" departure by Wittgenstein from Frege's doctrines is marked, in large part, by his embracing the redundancy theory of truth in his later philosophy. What makes this significant for Dummett's position on the relative importance of Frege, as compared with Wittgenstein, concerns the entirely negative implications this has for future work in philosophy if we follow Wittgenstein in this "radical" departure. From among the references in Dummett's writings where he mentions Wittgenstein's adoption of the redundancy

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[43] Cf., Gordon Baker, P.M.S. Hacker, *Language, Sense & Nonsense* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp.47-120, as one example of an attempt to call this distinction into question

[44] Dummett says: "It is easy to see how, when these principles [concerning the objectivity of sense], learned from Frege, had been encapsulated in the slogan, 'Meaning is use,' Wittgenstein came, in his middle period, to give a verificationist turn to them...Verificationism naturally first appeared [then] as a sharpening of Frege's conception of sense as given by truth-conditions: someone shows what he takes as the condition for the truth of a sentence by showing what he takes as establishing or excluding the truth", 'Frege and Wittgenstein' in Irving Block (ed.), *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1981), p.39.

theory of truth,[45] the following two passages from Wittgenstein's later philosophy represent, for Dummett, the primary evidence for his position on this issue:

At bottom, giving 'This is how things are' as the general form of propositions is the same as giving the definition: a proposition is whatever can be true or false. For instead of 'This is how things are' I could have said 'This is true'. (Or again 'This is false'.) But we have

'p' is true = p
'p' is false = not-p.

And to say that a proposition is whatever can be true or false amounts to saying: we call something a proposition when *in our language* we apply the calculus of truth functions to it. (PI, I:§136).

Are there true propositions in Russell's system, which cannot be proved in his system? - What is called a true proposition in Russell's system, then? For what does a proposition's *'being true'* mean? *'p' is true = p* . (That is the answer). (RFM, I, App. I:§§5-6).

While it is questionable whether Wittgenstein, in fact, embraced this theory of truth in his later philosophy, Dummett's opinion of this matter seems to suggest that this is the best explanation of why Wittgenstein in his later philosophy did not think that the notions of truth and falsity play a central role in the characterization of the sense of a sentence. If '"It is true that P" is equivalent to "P"' is all that can be said about the meaning of 'true', then, according to Dummett, this precludes the notion that the sense of 'P' can be explained as knowing under what conditions 'P' is true. Dummett thinks that this redundancy theory informs what Wittgenstein meant by the idea that meaning is use: "we must describe the use of each particular form of sentence directly, instead of trying to specify the use of an arbitrary sentence

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[45] Cf., Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.xx, xxxiv; Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* Second Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981, pp.359, 458; Michael Dummett, 'Frege and Wittgenstein' in Irving Block (ed.), *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1981); Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.331.

of some large class, such as assertoric or imperative sentences, in terms of truth-conditions, presupposed known."[46]

One way in which the above passages of Wittgenstein's can be interpreted is as follows: the idea that there is to be one key concept in a theory of meaning is to be rejected in favour a direct characterization of all the different features of the use of sentences. Dummett's major difficulty with this is that it cannot do justice to the way in which the meanings of sentences are determined by the meanings of the individual words which compose them: if nothing is to be taken as the key concept, then we lack entirely any notion of what the meaning of a word is should be.

2. Sense and Force

With the replacement of 'truth' by 'verification' as the key concept within a theory of meaning, Dummett is commited to the notion that the concept of truth can be used in giving an account of language-use. This must be possible if Frege's approach to meaning is at all correct, an approach which is commited to the distinction between sense and force. Given this distinction there must be a uniform explanation of all the possible particular contents of each kind of utterance (assertion, question, command, etc.). For, if Frege's approach to language is not tenable, this rules out an account of meaning not only in terms of truth-conditions, but also one in terms of verification. What makes this of interest here for Dummett is that Wittgenstein's adoption of the redundancy theory calls into question the very possibility of making this kind of distinction, a distinction which is required if a theory of meaning is to be possible at all.

Consider the following sections from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* :

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[46] Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* Second Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981a), p.359.

'But you will surely admit that there is a difference between pain-behaviour accompanied by pain and pain-behaviour without any pain?' - Admit it? What greater difference could there be? - 'And yet you again and again reach the conclusion that the sensation itself is a *nothing* .' - Not at all. It is not a *something* , but not a *nothing* either! The conclusion was only that a nothing would serve just as well as a something about which nothing could be said. We have only rejected the grammar which tries to force itself on us here.
The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts - which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please (§304).

Misleading parallel: the expression of pain is a cry - the expression of thought, a proposition.
As if the purpose of the proposition were to convey to one person how it is with another: only, so to speak, in his thinking part and not in his stomach (§317).

'But when I imagine something, something certainly *happens* !' Well, something happens - and then I make a noise. What for? Presumably in order to tell what happens. - But how is *telling* done? When are we said to *tell* anything? - What is the language-game of telling?
I should like to say: you regard it much too much as a matter of course that one can tell anything to anyone. That is to say: we are so much accustomed to communication through language, in conversation, that it looks to us as if the whole point of communication lay in this: someone else grasps the sense of my words - which is something mental: he as it were takes it into his own mind. If he then does something further with it as well, that is no part of the immediate purpose of language (§363).

What is the language-game of telling? Dummett is clear about what is at stake here: "That is the question that must have an answer if Frege's approach to language is at all correct: and here the difference between an account of sense in terms of truth-conditions and in terms of verification is quite beside the point; neither is workable unless we can distinguish sense from force."[47] What these three sections amount to, especially the second paragraph of §363, is a total renunciation of Frege's conception of language and the distinction upon which it is based. These remarks constitute a prime example of Wittgenstein's method of dealing with problems that arise in

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[47] Michael Dummett, 'Frege and Wittgenstein' in Irving Block (ed.), *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1981) p.40.

philosophy: focus attention not so much on the particulars of the problem, but on the way in which the problem is originally conceived (the grammar which forces us to think that there is a problem). To conceive of using language as essentially to communicate thoughts that are independent of our external actions is to fail to make the "radical break" that is needed in order to understand how it is interwoven with our other activities. This emphasis upon the various ways in which language can be used calls into question the idea that we can provide a uniform account of what it is to make an assertion. It is this plurality of use which provides the force behind Wittgenstein's remarks in §§22-23 against the Fregean idea that a definitive list of the types of force can be made, and therefore that a complete account of a language can be achieved.

3. The Semantic implications of Wittgenstein's Language-Games

What are the grounds for Wittgenstein's remarks in §§22-23? Dummett says the following:

> That is something I have never been able to understand. Perhaps it is just that it seems so difficult to achieve a general account of assertoric force, of the language-game of assertion. Perhaps some watertight formulation can be arrived at along Gricean lines; but then to invoke the concept, not only of intention, but of belief, appears to be begging the question, since most of the beliefs formed on the testimony of others could not be intelligibly ascribed to anyone who had not the command of the language. If we forswear all appeal to propositional attitudes, however, we hardly know how to begin.[48]

In trying to make sense out of these remarks by Wittgenstein Dummett reminds us that the novel thing about analytical philosophy was that it eschewed old questions and replaced them with new ones relating not to language in general, but to the forms of linguistic expression. Take another example from *Philosophical Investigations* :

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[48] Ibid., p.41.

We feel as if we had to *penetrate* phenomena: our investigation, however, is not directed towards phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the *'possibilities'* of phenomena. We remind ourselves, that is to say, of the *kind of statement* that we make about phenomena...Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one. Such an investigation sheds light on our problem by clearing misundestandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language (§90).

But what actual difference does this make? Dummett argues that if we have explained, for example, what it is for someone to have sudden understanding, do we not also explain what this means? Again, if we explain what it means to say that someone has suddenly understood something, have we not said what it is for such a statement to be true, thereby explaining what the phenomenon of sudden understanding is? Dummett thinks that the answer here depends upon whether Wittgenstein's advice in §90, as well as in the other sections we have considered, is either tactical or strategic.[49] If the advice is tactical, then we should understand that we are more likely to arrive at the right answer if we address ourselves, not to the question 'What is sudden understanding?', but to the more appropriate question: 'How do we use statements attributing sudden understanding to someone?' However, if his advice is to be understood as strategic, then we should conceive of the question 'What is sudden understanding?' as intrinsically misguided and unanswerable.

It is clear, according to Dummett, that Wittgenstein's advice was not to be taken as tactical. This is where Wittgenstein's redundancy theory of truth is of central significance: the use of an expression is not to be characterised in terms of truth-conditions which guide our use, but rather the use is to be characterised directly:

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[49] Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.163.

[We] have...to describe the actual *use* that we make of the expression - when we employ it, how we respond to another's employment of it; and this must be stated by reference to circumstances that we can recognise as obtaining - for instance, criteria that we can effectively apply. The use so described completely embodies the meaning of the expression: nothing further, concerning what is required for a statement involving that expression to be true, or equivalently, the state of affairs asserted by such a statement to obtain, is required.[50]

By laying down the consequences that follow when someone "suddenly understands" (that is, describing the type of circumstances in which it will be acknowledged as correct to say this), we shall have no need of an independently conceivable "state of affairs" that renders that statement true. To say that such a state of affairs is true is simply to say that the person suddenly understood. There is no independent way of coming to know these state of affairs except by describing the use of the expression 'suddenly understood' as Wittgenstein presents it. How does Dummett respond to this?

Dummett's selective use of Wittgenstein's ideas is guided by the principle that those ideas which find their origin in Frege's work are to be considered as worthy of philosophical consideration, irrespective of how they actually fit into Wittgenstein's later philosophy. The main force behind this principle is directly related to what can be seen, in the light of the negative implications of Wittgenstein's adoption of the redundancy theory of truth, as Dummett's general criticism of Wittgenstein's philosophy: it does not provide us with an indication of how future work in philosophy is to be done.[51]

The major disadvantage of approaching philosophy through Wittgenstein is its relatively unsystematic character. While Wittgenstein's writings themselves are not as unsystematic as they might appear, there does seem to be what Dummett calls

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[50] Ibid., pp.163-64.

[51] Cf., Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.448.

an "ineradicable ambiguity" in Wittgenstein to "whether or not it is possible to give a comprehensive and systematic meaning-theory for a natural language."[52] Dummett goes on:

> His language-games are presented as complete miniature languages, of which a comprehensive description can be given from outside. If they are to have the interest they are represented as having - if, in particular, they are to be as illuminating about what it is for expressions of a language to have meaning as is apparently intended - such a description, though enormously more complicated, ought to be in principle possible for existing human languages. And yet Wittgenstein's whole practice appears to repudiate the very possibility of any systematic framework for such a description, without any reason being advanced for its impossibility.[53]

This ambiguity that Dummett detects is illustrated by the supposed tension that exists in Wittgenstein's writings between maintaning that a theory of sense is mute, on the one hand, and by the apparent semantic implications that Wittgenstein's language-games have: that a comprehensive description "ought to be in principle possible for existing human languages." It is precisely because of the unsystematic character of Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy which makes Dummett remark that as "powerful and penetrating as are many of [Wittgenstein's] discussions of detailed questions in philosophy, including ones relating to language, we do not know how to go about extracting from his later writings any coherent general philosophy of language."[54] To think, Dummett believes, that no theory of meaning is possible at all is one which is not only "defeatist", but one which runs counter to "obvious facts."[55]

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[52] Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.306.
[53] Ibid., p.306.
[54] Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.451.
[55] Ibid., p.451.

One of these "obvious facts", according to Dummett, is the commonplace observation that to have mastered a language is to understand a potential infinity of sentences. Since we are able to use language and understand sentences we have never previously encountered, it seems counter-intuitive, and ultimately "defeatist", to think that it is impossible to say what it is that we actually can do. The phenomenon of language-use requires an explanation.

The forcefulness of Dummett's general criticism here can be significantly weakened by observing that one of Wittgenstein's aims in his later philosophy was to undermine the idea that there is one way of conducting a philosophical investigation. Wittgenstein argues that to expect philosophical inquiry to be conducted in one way is a condition one sets up prior to an inquiry, a condition which has less to do with what we actually know from an inquiry, than it does with what we expect to know (Wittgenstein's talk about "being captivated by a particular picture" is directed at this notion of what is expected of a philosophical investigation, a prime example of a metaphysical shadow being cast by the requirement of a particular grammer). It is not surprising, therefore, that Wittgenstein does not offer us what Dummett requires of him, since such a requirement is ruled out of consideration.

However, Dummett's general criticism is itself based upon an argument that is concerned to show that Wittgenstein's descriptive approach to philosophy is not free from meaning-theoretic assumptions, and therefore not free from a methodological approach to philosophy. This conception is not simply to be propounded as somehow already acknowledged as being independently correct, as Wittgenstein apparently thought; rather, this conception itself stands in need of justification.

Dummett thinks that this can be seen from the need to distinguish between what is *customarily* said from what is *justifiably* said (what the conventions

governing our use of the language require or entitle us to say). Our habits of the kind of statement we are accustomed to make about phenomena require scrutiny, they simply cannot be taken as correct without some kind of examination. Given the legitimacy of this distinction it appears that something more is required than simply assembling reminders of what everyone seems to know about how language functions. We need to recognize, Dummett maintains, that Wittgenstein himself employed a philosophical methodology which rests upon general ideas about meaning, ideas which can be justified only by a sketch of a theory of meaning in terms of those very ideas.[56]

Dummett argues that if we desire to give an account of the meaning of a sentence directly in terms of its use, something which, Dummett thinks, Wittgenstein recommends that we do, then we must do so in two ways: we must consider (1) the conditions-for an utterance (what warrants the utterance), and (2) the consequences-of an utterance (how an acceptance of the utterance modifies or is manifested in our behaviour).[57] On the basis of these two aspects Dummett presents three possible strategies for providing a systematic account of use: (1) given the desire to maintain harmony between the conditions-for and the consequences-of an utterance, one can focus primary attention upon one of the two alternatives (for example, the conditions-for) as being that in terms of which the meanings of expressions are to be specified. We therefore lay down a uniform means of deriving the consequences-of accepting any statement as true from a prior consideration of the conditions-for any statement; (2) one can focus primary attention upon the other of the two alternatives (consequences-of) as being that in terms of which the meanings of expressions are to be specified. We therefore lay down a uniform means of deriving what the conditions-for making a given statement are to be from

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[56] Cf., Ibid., p.166.

[57] Cf., Dummett's 'Reply to Pears' in Brian McGuiness and Gianluigi Oliveri (eds), *The Philosophy of Michael Dummett* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), pp.273-281.

a prior consideration of the consequences-of accepting it as true; and (3) one can reject the very idea of harmony between the conditions-for and the consequences-of an utterance, regarding both as being independently determined. The meanings of statements, on this account, are to be jointly stipulated: "one lay[s] down the contribution of the expression concerned to determin[e] what warrant is required for making any statement in which it figures, and the other lay[s] down its contribution to determin[e] the consequences of accepting such a statement."[58] All three approaches, however, have this in common: the stress on the conditions-for and the consequences-of an utterance in determining the use of actual sentences.

Given these two aspects, and these three possible strategies, Dummett thinks that "it does not yet at all follow that a *systematic* account of linguistic meaning - and, in principle, of the meanings of the expressions of any given language - is to be ruled out; it has to be investigated whether a systematic account can be given in *these* terms."[59] This conviction of Dummett's is directly related to what he thinks are the semantic implications of Wittgenstein's own use of what Dummett calls "baby languages" in the descriptions of language-games in the *Investigations* . For Dummett a "baby language" is one of the rudimentary languages that Wittgenstein introduces in order to explain the concept of a language-game. Such a language constitutes, in the examples that Wittgenstein provides, the entire language of some community.[60] Dummett raises two issues here. First, since Wittgenstein's descriptions of these languages constitute a complete account of how they function, it does not necessarily mean that one could not give a comprehensive and systematic account of how our entire natural language functions: "Suppose we

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[58] Ibid., p.276.

[59] Ibid., p.275.

[60] Cf., Ibid., p.276. While Dummett does not explicitly refer us to an instance of such a language, a primary example would be the one found in §2 of the *Philosophical Investigations* . Wittgenstein himself says in §6 that we can imagine, for the sake of clarifying the nature of a language-game, that "§2 was the *whole* language of A and B; even the whole language of a tribe."

started with some baby language, and then expanded it, step by step, to take in ever more of the language we in fact have: at what point in this process would a comprehensive account cease to be possible?"[61]

The second issue is related to the first: the point of these baby languages of Wittgenstein's is, it seems, to show what meaning is by describing a rudmentary case. If this is true, then what is the difference, Dummett asks, between them and the discussion of the form that a particular theory of meaning ought to take for an entire natural language? The connection between our utterances and our actions provides a good reason why such a theory of meaning is important:

> That is not at all to say that our utterances are not ultimately linked to action, or that that link may be ignored in a theory of meaning: only that the link is not, in general, *immediate* . The effect of what is said to him upon a hearer's actions is usually remote: perhaps because it will operate only in certain circumstances not yet, and perhaps not ever, realised; or, again, because it will be mediated by conclusions he will draw inferentially, probably by appeal to additional premises. The baby languages give no hint of how the remoteness of the link between speech and action is to be accommodated. This may point to an answer to the first [issue]; but, if it does, that weakens the claim of the baby languages to teach us anything illuminating about linguistic meaning.[62]

Dummett seems to be suggesting here that these "baby languages" present us with the following two alternatives: either the baby languages provide a theoretical example of the possibility, in principle, of an entire description of our natural language; or, given the fact that these languages give no hint of how the remoteness between speech and action is to be accommodated (therefore calling into question the possibility of an entire description of our natural language, since such a description should account for the link between speech and action), these baby

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[61] Ibid., p.275.
[62] Ibid., pp.276-77.

languages ultimately do not teach us anything illuminating about linguistic meaning.

Underlying the importance of clarifying the link between speech and action is Dummett's belief in the requirement of harmony between the conditions-for and the consequences-of an utterance. For this reason a composite theory of meaning as given in (3) above is rejected by Dummett as an adequate approach to clarifying the notion of use. If such a theory is possible it must avail itself of the other two possibilities, and formulated, Dummett thinks, "in terms that Wittgenstein would recognise as directly related to our practice in using the language."[63]

Despite Wittgenstein's objections to a theory of meaning for language, Dummett thinks that Wittgenstein's emphasis upon use does lead toward the possibility of a systematic theory of meaning for natural language. It also embodies a particular notion of what linguistic meaning consists in (what Pears calls Wittgenstein's 'particularism').[64] Dummett explains that this particularism of Wittgenstein's is questionable for two reasons. First, this approach to language created a temptation to which Wittgenstein more than once succumbed. Take the following example from *Philosophical Investigations* where Wittgenstein is concerned to detach certain declarative sentences from the class of those that express thoughts:

A cry is not a description. But there are transitions. And the words 'I am afraid' may approximate more, or less, to being a cry. They may come quite close to this and also be *far* removed from it.
We surely do not always say somone is *complaining* , because he says he is in pain. So the words 'I am in pain' may be a cry of complaint, and may be something else. (IIix).

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[63] Ibid., p.278.

[64] Pears describes this as Wittgenstein's opposition to theorizing in philosophy, with the result of examining particular instances of language-use in order to contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon of meaning. Cf., David Pears, 'Philosophical Theorizing and Particularism: Michael Dummett on Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy of Language' in Ibid., p.45.

Dummett takes this to be a prime example of the first problem with Wittgenstein's particularism, namely, of saying 'sometimes' when it should have been Wittgenstein's business, devoted as he was to the examination of language use, to specify 'when'. Wittgenstein does not go into details here about when the words 'I am in pain' are, or are not, a cry of complaint; but, as Dummett remarks, this should be the next step in any rigorous enquiry into linguistic meaning. While Wittgenstein was right to point out that the world 'pain' is, in many instances, confined to first-person avowals, nevertheless, there are other instances where the word 'pain' occurs in sentences which do express thoughts. Dummett thinks that Wittgenstein's analysis of the concpet of pain as related to avowals should play a crucial role in how we first acquire the concept 'pain'. But Dummett thinks that this is only the beginning. A piecemeal approach will never succeed in providing us with an account of our mastery of more sophisticated uses of the word 'pain'.

Dummett's second problem with Wittgenstein's particularism concerns how this influenced Wittgenstein to choose the most obvious features of our use of an expression in characterising its linguistic meaning. A good example here, for Dummett, is Wittgenstein's point in *Zettel* that the diagnosis that another person is in pain is not based primarily on an argument provided by the intellect, but on a natural tendency to react with concern and help.[65] Dummett remarks:

> I wonder whether Wittgenstein was so ignorant of the world as his remarks on this score suggest. One cannot tell whether or not someone believes another to be in pain from whether he reacts with concern and help, for men have quite as natural a tendency to take pleasure in inflicting distress and pain on those within their power. The most sophisticated manifestation of this is to treat them as if they were inanimate objects. The prisoners in the Japanese prisoner-of-war camp on whom experiments in chemical and biological warfare were carried out were referred to by

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[65] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), §540.3.

the Japanese term for 'blocks of wood', and they were treated with corresponding indifference; that did not manifest a belief they they were inanimate objects.[66]

Part of what makes Wittgenstein's remarks here important is that it is one case among many in his later writings where stress is put upon the fact that language, in many instances, receives support from pre-linguistic, naturalistic, impulses from the human subject. For Wittgenstein these kinds of counter-examples should make us hesitant to think that the use of language by human subjects is primarily the intellectual practice of expressing thoughts. This much is clear and uncontestable. But, where Dummett's criticism receives it's force is precisely in the observation that the correct description of the use of language can be quite difficult to obtain at times given the complex mixture of ideology and motive which Dummett's use of the Japanese prisoner-of-war example clearly illustrates. Dummett thinks that on Wittgenstein's approach all that is needed is a counter-example to a particular picture that has held one captive in order for that person to be "cured." Wittgenstein seems to underestimate the highly complex nature of the connection between speech and action. What is lacking in such an approach is a general theory in order to explain the general significance of such a cure, that is, how such a person is, in fact, cured. Wittgenstein's excessive preoccupation with piecemeal intellectual therapy is, on Dummett's criticism, an important first step in clarifying how linguistic meaning is related to use. Yet, it stops short of the kind of examination which such a preoccupation should inevitably lead.

The important next step, for Dummett, would be a general theory of meaning which would (a) attempt to make full use of the kind of insightful remarks Wittgenstein makes about language use, and (b) deal with the complex (remote) connection between speech and action, while (c) avoiding the supposed uncrossable

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[66] Ibid., p.280.

boundry between philosophical description and scientific explanation. This is a boundary which Wittgenstein, for whatever reason, did not want to cross despite the fact that the semantic implications of Wittgenstein's remarks seem to suggest that it must be crossed.

The point here can be summed up as follows: Wittgenstein's "particularism" is itself based upon a self-conscious attitude toward language and its meaning. It is only by extending the loosly connected remarks of Wittgenstein into a more general theoretical approach to language that such an attitude can become clear and capable of analysis. Given Dummett's interpretation of Wittgenstein this insight is correct. But it is important to realize what this implies. Wittgenstein's descriptive approach to philosophy might, in the end, be ultimately correct. Dummett, it seems, would not deny this possibility. However, Dummett's point is that the only way to find out if Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy is correct is to actually construct a theory of meaning. Therefore, to exclude the possibility of a theory of meaning for language at the outset is, Dummett thinks, question-begging since such an exclusion is not free from meaning-theoretic assumptions.

Chapter Four
Problems

Dummett argues that the only way to find out if Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy is correct is to construct a theory of meaning. To exclude the possibility of a theory of meaning for language at the outset is, Dummett thinks, question-begging since such an exclusion is not free from meaning-theoretic assumptions. An essential part of Dummett's own theory of meaning is that it is epistemological: a theory about how we grasp sense. In the course of his argument for this theory Dummett makes appeal to the concept of implicit knowledge. This appeal is absolutely central for the success of Dummett's epistemology of linguistic understanding. However, can such a theory, with such an appeal, be made coherent? In this chapter we will look at four problems that have arisen for Dummett's theory in direct connection with this concept. The first two problems can be met by Dummett's theory. However, what makes Dummett able to respond and overcome the first two problems is responsible for the inability of Dummett's theory to overcome the last two problems. We will, in turn, consider whether such problems indicate whether Wittgenstein's attitude toward theorizing about meaning is warranted.

1. The Historical Problem

Hans Sluga's historical interpretation of Frege helps to provide the non-historian with an understanding of the nineteenth century mathematical and philosophical background to Frege's philosophy.[1] His interpretation has, however, a deeper philosophical significance. Sluga attempts to show how analytical philosophers came to conceive of the analysis of meaning the way they have. Sluga hopes that philosophers will realize that only within a given historical context do

[1] Cf., Hans Sluga, *Gottlob Frege* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

philosophical concepts originate, flourish, and eventually fade away.[2] Analytical techniques of analysis do not, Sluga thinks, lend themselves to talk about the meaning and interpretation of the philosophical texts which make up this tradition. Sluga rightly states that this observation does not undermine the actual insights of, say, Frege's logicism as an investigatory strategy.[3] What it does deny is the possibility of a systematic theory of meaning. Sluga explains:

> A contemporary analytic philosopher reaches his problems through a training that involves interpreting texts which constitute the analytic tradition. The meaning of the contemporary problems is therefore a function of the meaning of the historical discourse within the tradition. But if that meaning is inaccessible with the tools of the analytic theory of meaning, then there is at least one sense in which that theory cannot be basic to philosophy.[4]

According to Sluga linguistic meaning is a function of the concrete uses of historical discourse, not the reverse. It is therefore no wonder that Sluga takes Michael Dummett to task for not considering fully the philosophical consequences of this point as it relates to Sluga's interpretation of Frege and the analytical tradtion.[5]

Sluga maintains that Dummett's reading of Frege is motivated more by semantic anti-realism than by a desire to understand the historical significance of Frege's philosophy.[6] Sluga therefore considers Dummett's reading as "a paradigm

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[2] Ibid., p.6.

[3] Cf. Hans Sluga, 'Frege: the early years' in Richard Rorty et al., eds., *Philosophy in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.354.

[4] Hans Sluga, *Gottlob Frege* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p.4. Sluga's reason for concluding that the meaning of the historical discourse of analytical philosophy is inaccessible with the tools of the analytic theory of meaning is that the actual progress of such theorizing has had few positive results: "After eighty years of debate linguistic philosophers are still not agreed on the semantics of simple proper names. How long would it take to construct a semantics of philosophical discourse?"

[5] This debate between Dummett and Sluga can be found in the following sequence of papers: Hans Sluga, 'Frege and the Rise of Analytic Philosophy' in *Inquiry* , Vol. 18 (1975), pp.471-86; Michael Dummett, 'Frege as a Realist' in *Inquiry* , Vol. 19 (1976), pp.455-92; Hans Sluga, 'Frege's Alleged Realism' in *Inquiry* , Vol. 20 (1977), pp.227-42.

[6] "In [Dummett's] *Frege* book we are faced with the...difficulty that the exposition of Frege's views is combined with the development of a theory of meaning that seems to owe as much to mathematical intuitionism and modal theory as it does to Fregean ideas", Hans Sluga, 'Frege's Alleged Realism' in *Inquiry* , Vol. 20 (1977), p.227.

for the failure of analytic philosophers to come to grips with the actual, historical Frege."[7] This indictment is made in spite of what Sluga describes as Dummett's "notable step" beyond Fregean objectivism: Dummett's appropriation of Brouwer and Wittgenstein toward his theory of meaning. This influences Dummett to argue that such a theory is not about timeless "Fregean" thoughts. It is about temporal understanding. This step, while notable, is apparently not notable enough since Dummett's temporal understanding is too abstract and formal. It is not what Sluga thinks it should be: concrete and historical. Sluga thinks that Dummett's step away from Fregean objectivism is tainted by the formalist interpretation of temporality found in Kant, and articulated in Brouwer. But Sluga is not surprised that Dummett's notable step does not lead him to think of temporal understanding as concrete and historical: to do so would be to question the foundational nature of a systematic theory of meaning. It would seriously question the legitimacy of speaking of the *logical* basis of metaphysics.

Sluga's historical reading of Frege, therefore, is but one part of a larger project of re-examining the idea, supposedly inspired by Frege, that philosophy has somehow progressed from metaphysics and epistemology, to the philosophy of language.[8] Sluga examines this idea within the context of a particular line of descent which he thinks has its beginnings in Frege and finds it culmination, and termination, in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein. The actual significance of Wittgenstein's influence in this reading is acknowledged by Sluga, but little more is said about it. Sluga does complain, however, that despite Wittgenstein's pervasive influence on contemporary analytical philosophy few have drawn what he calls

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[7] Hans Sluga, *Gottlob Frege* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p.3.

[8] "In accordance with a contemporary view that closely links ontological problems to logical ones, Dummett has also maintained that Frege displaced epistemology from its position as 'first philosophy' and that he put logic into that place", Hans Sluga, 'Frege as a Rationalist' in Matthias Schirn, ed., *Studien zu Frege I: Logik und Philosophie der Mathematik* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1976), p.30.

"the most radical consequences out of Wittgenstein's thought."[9] According to Sluga the tendency among analytic philosophers has been to pick insights out of Wittgenstein's philosophy without acknowledging that his philosophy actually undermines "the view of the relation of logic, mathematics, and language that has prevailed in analytic philosophy since Frege."[10] The little he does say about Wittgenstein's significance is found in the penultimate paragraph in his book on Frege:

> For Wittgenstein logic and mathematics are outgrowths of language and cannot be used to reveal the essence of language. According to Wittgenstein, that essence is revealed by neither a theory of objective meaning nor a theory of understanding. The essence of language shows itself only if we attend to the concrete uses of language. On this conception the abstract theory of meaning must give way in all but the most trivial cases to the examination of actual historical discourse.[11]

It is noteworthy, and ironic, that Sluga includes Dummett among the class of those philosophers who have not acknowledged the radical consequences of Wittgenstein's insights. It is *noteworthy* because Dummett, by his own admission, has come to understand Frege based on a philosophical background "in which Wittgenstein has been that figure of the modern era overshadowing all others."[12] It is *ironic* because Dummett's argument for the *need* for a theory of meaning is based upon taking, with full seriousness, "the most radical consequences out of Wittgenstein's throught" in order to see whether these consequences are worth considering. Dummett thinks that a follower of Wittgenstein cannot evade systematic theories since such a person employs a methodology which itself rests upon general ideas about meaning. These ideas, and the "radical consequences" which result from them, can only be vindicated "by a plausible sketch of a systematic

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[9] Hans Sluga, *Gottlob Frege* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p.186.
[10] Ibid., p.186.
[11] Ibid., p.186.
[12] Michael Dummett, *The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. xv-xvi.

account of a language in terms of just those ideas."[13] Consider Sluga's own construal of Wittgenstein's significance. Sluga speaks of "historical discourse." If, by "historical", Sluga means "at a time", then to speak of "historical discourse" is redundant. If, however, the concept of "historical" for Sluga has some further force, then such a concept rests upon general ideas about meaning which, according to Dummett, require vindication.

Sluga is correct to describe Dummett's theory of meaning as a "notable step" in the right direction. However, given Dummett's interpretation of Frege and Wittgenstein it is questionable whether Sluga appreciates the actual significance of this step within the historical context of the analytical tradition. Sluga's problem is that in his attempt to re-examine the role of analysis within analytical philosophy he puts priority upon only one of the two great formative ideas that (to follow Putnam) Hegel has contributed to our culture.[14] Hegel emphasised (1) that all of our ideas of rationality are historically conditioned, and (2) that there is an objective notion of rationality which, as a culture, we are slowly coming to possess. This reference to Hegel is important here since (1) and (2) correspond to the two central concepts at the heart of Dummett's philosophy of language: historical description and rational explanation. Sluga's stress upon the first Hegelian idea manifests itself in his embracing, with Wittgenstein, the idea that any "abstract theory of meaning must give way in all but the most trivial cases to the examination of actual historical discourse."[15] Philosophy, then, must only describe historical discourse. Contrast this with Dummett's own response to Sluga's historically sensitive methodological claims. Dummett believes that in interpreting a philosopher there can be no substitute for rigorously thinking through the arguments, hidden assumptions,

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[13] Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.166.

[14] Cf., Hilary Putnam, *Realism and Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp.287-303.

[15] Hans Sluga, *Gottlob Frege* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p.186.

eventual answers, and the relations these have to other positions that the philosopher maintains. Philosophical ideas must, in short, be subject to logical analysis. Part of this analysis considers the historical context. We "need to recognize which theses a given philosopher took to be familiar and which new, which uncontroversial and which contentious; we need to catch his allusions; we need to identify what he conceived himself as opposing. But historical comparisons do not provide an alternative, or preferable, path to the same goal as logical analysis: they are of use only as going to inform such analysis."[16]

Dummett goes on to offer, in the form of a question, what he thinks is a good test for the expositional adequacy of a great philosopher: how interesting would such an exposition be, as a piece of philosophy, to someone who neither read, nor was curious about, the best way to interpret this philosopher? To pass this test does not necessarily mean that the exposition adequately represents the philosopher, but to fail this test is to fall short of providing an account of this philosopher's thought.[17] Dummett concludes that Sluga's Frege does not pass the test: the historical method which Sluga uses "makes it hard to see what was original about Frege at all."[18]

This conclusion of Dummett's is somewhat of an overstatement. Sluga's historical reconstruction of Frege does not undermine the fact that there are distinctive and important ideas in Frege's philosophy. In fact, if we follow Sluga in interpreting Frege's logicism not as a permanent truth but as an investigatory strategy, then it is hard to see how his philosophy, while historically conditioned, is *not* distinctive. Without Frege's commitment to logicism he might never have

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[16] Michael Dummett, *The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), p.528.
[17] Ibid., p.528.
[18] Ibid., p.529.

constructed his *Begriffsschrift* .[19] The same claim can be made about the place of the context principle in Frege's philosophy. To indicate, as Sluga does, that the context principle "was an expression of a fundamental philosophical insight that belongs to the anti-atomistic tradition characteristic of classical German philosophy"[20] does not take away from Frege's distinctive originality in his use of this principle in *Grundlagen* .

However we take this overstatement of Dummett's it is important to notice that he is saying something important about Hegel's legacy and, in turn, about the importance of rational explanation and historical description in philosophy. This legacy of historically conditioned, yet objective, rationality can easily be seen as having manifested itself in the scientific and non-scientific tendencies at work within analytical philosophy. In this light Dummett's own appropriation of Frege and Wittgenstein indicates that he is aware of the inherent problem within analytical philosophy: the problem of remaining historically sensitive without becoming historicist. This is precisely why Dummett's use of Wittgenstein (and Brouwer) is a "notable step" in the right direction. It is an acknowledgement of the fact that rationality is historically conditioned. The trick is to acknowledge this without becoming an historicist. The extent to which Sluga embraces the "radical consequences" of Wittgenstein's philosophy indicates (a) that Sluga has misunderstood the significance of Dummett's "notable step", and (b) that Sluga is operating with general ideas about meaning ("historical" discourse) without semantic vindication. This does not mean that Dummett's own theory is without problems. What it does mean is that Dummett is aware, to an extent that Sluga is not, about the importance of remaining faithful to Hegel's legacy as manifested in our scientific and non-scientific tendencies.

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[19] Cf., Hans Sluga, 'Frege: the early years' in Richard Rorty et al., eds., *Philosophy in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.354.
[20] Hans Sluga, 'Frege and the Rise of Analytic Philosophy' in *Inquiry* , Vol. 18 (1975), p.485.

2. The Psychological Problem

If Sluga's acceptance of the radical consequences of Wittgenstein's philosophy places him on the "historically conditioned" side of the Hegelian legacy, then Noam Chomsky's acceptance of the consequences of natural science for the philosophy of language and linguistics places him on the "objectively conditioned" side (it is not without significance that Kripke cites Chomsky as characterizing our scientific tendency). Chomsky conceives of his investigations into human language as a branch of cognitive psychology which focuses its attention on "the language faculty."[21] These investigations are self-consciously modeled upon what Husserl called the "Galilean style" in physics: producing a representation of the universe through the use of abstract mathematical models.[22] For Chomsky, therefore, the study of language is methodologically no different from the study of physics.[23]

This self-conscious scientific approach to the human mind and its products indicates why Chomsky is more concerned with the language *faculty* than with *language* (a concept which he thinks is "derivative and perhaps not very interesting").[24] According to Chomsky the language *faculty* is but one subsystem within the mind (defined as a "system of interacting subsystems").[25] Since this subsystem is made up of a number of grammatical "rules that generate and relate certain mental representations, including in particular representations of form and meaning",[26] Chomsky thinks it is better to focus our attention on what knowledge of grammar consists in, rather than upon the question "What is knowledge of human language and how does it arise?" On Chomsky's approach such a question is

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[21] Noam Chomsky, *Rules and Representations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p.4.
[22] Cf., Ibid., pp.8-9.
[23] Cf., Noam Chomsky, *Reflections on Language* (London: Fontana, 1976), p.184f.
[24] Noam Chomsky, *Rules and Representations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p.90.
[25] Ibid., p.89.
[26] Ibid., p.90.

wrongly put since it does not identify a natural kind: there is no such thing as "human language" understood as a shared "superlanguage."[27]

This scientific approach leads Chomsky to reject what he calls a "curious dualism" in contemporary thought about language.[28] This dualism manifests itself in three ways: (i) the several variants of the bifurcation thesis found in the literature;[29] (ii) the hesitancy of attributing to individuals the psychological form in which grammatical competence consists; and (iii) the unwillingness to regard theories of language as psychological theories, theories understood and interpreted "in the ways that we take for granted in the natural sciences."[30] Chomsky thinks that Dummett's attempt at producing a theory of meaning for natural language is a good example of this "curious dualism" as it relates to (ii) and (iii). Chomsky is correct. Consider this remark from the preface of Dummett's recent book *The Seas of Language* :

> A speakers' employment of his language rests upon his knowledge of it: his knowledge of what the words and sentences of the language mean is an essential part of the explanation of his saying what he does. What matters about knowledge, for philosophy, is not how it is stored but in what form it is delivered. Hence, however psychology may evaluate it, Chomsky's characterization of mastery of a language as unconscious knowledge contributes nothing to philosophical understanding.[31]

What is the basis for this distinction between "storage" and "deliverance"? This question is the central focus of Chomsky's criticism of Dummett's position.

One of the major issues that divides Chomsky and Dummett is whether languages are recursive.[32] A recursive language is one whose syntactic rules can be

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[27] Ibid., p.118.
[28] Ibid., p.141.
[29] This is the thesis "that theories of meaning, language and much of psychology are faced with a problem of indeterminacy that is qualitatively different in some way from the underdetermination of theory by evidence in the natural sciences." Ibid., p.16.
[30] Ibid., p.141.
[31] Michael Dummett, *The Seas of Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.xi.
[32] Cf., Noam Chomsky, *Rules and Representations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p.272.

applied repeatedly in the construction of compound sentences of any size; and, conversely, whose syntactic rules can determine whether each of its component parts is itself a sentence of the language (this can proceed down to the level of atomic sentences). Sentences which conform to these syntactic rules are often referred to as well-formed formulas (wffs). According to Dummett one of the practical abilities that we are alleged to have, an ability that gets special attention in his theory of meaning, is that for each sentence in a large, perhaps infinite, range, we have the capacity to recognize whether or not it is well-formed. Chomsky points out that this seems to imply, for Dummett, that the grammar represented in a speakers mind (what we implicitly know) generates a recursive language.

Are languages recursive? Chomsky thinks that despite the many arguments in the literature that try to show that languages are recursive they do not claim to show this to be necessary. In fact Chomsky thinks that anyone who has discussed the subject thinks that it is at least a priori possible that languages are nonrecursive.[33] Where does this leave Dummett? Chomsky points out that Dummett's intuitionism would lead him to conclude that language must be recursive.[34] So, in order to demonstrate the plausibility of holding to the possibility that languages are nonrecursive, Chomsky tries to show how Dummett's ideas about language are highly misleading; and when they are presented as empirical hypotheses, apparently false.[35] Nonrecursion is important for Chomsky since it provides him with the basis for denying that there is anything like a "superlanguage", and for denying that there is some essential property to our understanding of language like "verifiability."

Chomsky begins his discussion with the distinction between (a) philosophical theories held to be true about personal capacities and implicit knowledge, and (b)

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[33] "It surely does not seem impossible a priori that a person can have the mental representation, ultimately the physical coding, of some nonrecursive set." Ibid., p.272.
[34] Ibid., p.272.
[35] Ibid., p.117.

psychological hypotheses about inner mental mechanisms. While this is an important distinction in Dummett's work it is based, according to Chomsky, on a more fundamental distinction. This distinction is between "essential behavior" which elucidates what it means to speak a language, and "inessential behavior" which may bear on inner psychological mechanisms but does not bear on the complex skill of speaking and mastering a language. Chomsky cannot see any basis for this more fundamental distinction. Such a distinction, even if it could be drawn, does not necessarily preclude "many questions that can be raised about inner mechanisms."[36] Chomsky goes on:

> No matter how broadly we cast our net in seeking evidence, it will always be true that our theories leave open innumerable questions about mechanisms. This will be true no matter how far an inquiry into language and its use proceeds. When should we be willing to say that we *are* presenting psychological hypotheses and describing 'inner psychological mechanisms?' As far as I can see, we should be willing to say at every stage that we are presenting psychological hypotheses and presenting conditions that the 'inner mechanisms' are alleged to meet.[37]

Chomsky's claim here is that insofar as Dummett is making *factual* claims about personal capacities and implicit knowledge, such claims are not immune, in principle, from certain domains of factual evidence that Dummett dismisses in advance as irrelevant. While Dummett's theory may succeed in its own terms, it still needs to face up to the "innumerable questions about mechanisms" that it raises. In fact, Chomsky does not even think that Dummett's theory can succeed in its own terms. Dummett's verificationism is a case in point. Consider the following factual claim given by Dummett:

> A generalization of the intuitionistic theory of meaning for the language of mathematics must follow Quine in treating the verification of a sentence as consisting in the actual process whereby in practice we might come to accept it as having been conclusively established as true, a process which will usually involve

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[36] Ibid., p.111.
[37] Ibid., pp.111-12.

the tacit or explicit use, in inference, of other sentences; proof, which is verification by inference alone, thus becomes merely a limiting case, not a distinct species.[38]

This leads Dummett to argue that a theory of meaning should make as explicit as possible the basis on which we judge sentences to be true, thereby explaining the meaning of sentences in terms of human capacities for recognizing (verifying) truth. To base a theory of meaning on truth, rather than on verification, is to misunderstand that "the truth of many sentences of our language appears to transcend our powers of recognition."[39]

This stress on recognition of truth-value follows from the following three principles which underly Dummett's verificationist theory of meaning: (1) the meaning of any well-formed sentence in our language depends in a rule-goverened way on the meanings of its constituents; (2) when we are mastering language, and are exercising that mastery, all that is available to us for gleaning and conveying meanings is the observable behaviour of fellow speakers; and (3) our knowledge of sentence meaning can be displayed by an appropriate exercise of recognitional capacities shared by fellow speakers.[40] Dummett gets (1) from Frege, (2) from the late Wittgenstein, and (3) is Dummett's original contribution. Chomsky thinks, however, that such a construal of sentence meaning leads to "paradoxical conclusions."[41]

Chomsky invites us to consider the following universal statement about an unsurveyable domain: 'The universe is constantly expanding' (the discovery that supposedly turned Woody Allen into a neurotic; hereafter referred to as 'U'). What are the implications of saying that we are incapable of recognizing this state of affairs

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[38] Michael Dummett, 'What is a Theory of Meaning? (II)' in Gareth Evans and John McDowell, eds., *Truth and Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p.111.
[39] Ibid., p.88.
[40] Cf., Neil Tennant, *Anti-Realism and Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p.3.
[41] Noam Chomsky, *Rules and Representations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p.116.

as obtaining? Consider Chomsky's understanding of Dummett's answer to this question:

> According to Dummett, 'if we are able to understand a description of a state of affairs which we are incapable of recognizing as obtaining, and to entertain the supposition that it *does* obtain, then there is no reason not to conceive of meaning as given in terms of truth conditions which we cannot in general recognize.' But he [Dummett] feels he has shown that we cannot so conceive of meaning, so it follows that we cannot understand a description of a state of affairs which we are incapable of recognizing as obtaining and entertain the supposition that it does obtain.[42]

What is wrong with this conclusion? In what sense is this conclusion paradoxical? A conclusion like this can be traced, Chomsky thinks, "to a complex of leading ideas about language, practical abilities, learning, capacities and skills, and implicit knowledge that are highly misleading at best, and when presented clearly as empirical hypotheses, apparently false."[43]

If we follow Chomsky's reading of Dummett here, then it is true that we cannot understand the state of affairs described by the statement 'The universe is constantly expanding' *and* entertain the supposition that this state of affairs does obtain. To think otherwise is to be faced with the problem of positing the classical concept of truth as the central concept within a theory of meaning. There are two reasons why this conclusion seems "paradoxical": (1) it seems that we can actually understand this statement and entertain its truth-value (at least Woody Allen seems able to do this), and (2) this conclusion can be used in an argument that actually leads to a reductio of Dummett's actual claims. Consider the following:

(1) The central property of a theory of meaning is verifiability (not truth).
(2) Understanding the sentence 'The universe is constantly expanding' consists in an ability to determine in some canonical way a verification for its assertion or a verification for its denial.
(3) But, we must (and in fact do) understand the undecidable sentence 'The universe is constantly expanding' prior to determining in some canonical way a verification

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[42] Ibid., pp.116-17.
[43] Ibid., p.117.

for its assertion or denial takes place, since this provides the semantic basis for recognizing whether such a sentence has a determinate truth value in the first place.

This leads to a contradiction. It seems, therefore, that Chomsky's characterization of mastery of a language as unconscious knowledge does contribute something to philosophical understanding: it provides the basis for understanding undecidable sentences.

Should we follow Chomsky's reading of Dummett? At least when it comes to thinking that we cannot understand a description of a state of affairs which we are incapable of recognizing as obtaining, Chomsky has misunderstood Dummett's position. By invoking Fregean compositionality it can be pointed out that Chomsky's interpretation of Dummett is too narrow. In fact by invoking compositionality Dummett can argue that he is using the very *factual* claims about language that Chomsky apparently endorses.[44]

What Dummett says is that if we are able to understand a description of a state of affairs which we are incapable of recognizing as obtaining *and* entertain the supposition that it does obtain, then there is no reason not to conceive of meaning in terms of classical truth-conditions. Dummett is *not* saying that the first conjunct of the antecedent of this conditional *cannot* obtain. What he is saying is that if we affirm both conjuncts of the antecedent, then nothing prevents us from inferring the consequent. However, we do not need to affirm both conjuncts. What must be distinguished here is (i) a sentence having a determinate truth-value, and (ii) a sentence having a determinate truth-condition. Dummett is not demanding that understanding must consist in a ability to *decide* the actual truth value of a

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[44] Fodor and Lepore state that there are properties of natural language and thought that suggest that compositionality holds for linguistic and mental representation. One property that they mention is that every natural language can express an open-ended, potentially infinite, set of propositions. They cite Chomsky's *Rules and Representations* , pp.220ff, as endorsing this principle (they also cite Frege's 'Compound Thoughts' and Davidson's 'Theories of meaning and learnable languages'). Cf., Jerry Fodor, Ernest Lepore (eds), *Holism* (Oxford: Blackwell,1992), p.175.

sentence. What Dummett demands simply is that understanding should consist in an ability to recognize, when presented with the appropriate evidence, whether it establishes the truth or falsity of the sentence. For example, consider Goldbach's conjecture (For every even number n greater than 2 there are prime numbers p, q, such that n = (p+q)). There are a number of things we do not know about this conjecture: we do not know whether it is true, false, or undecidable; we do not know if we shall ever happen upon a proof or discover a counterexample to it; and we do not know whether the proof, if there is one, will require great mathematical intuition, or whether it will be something that any undergraduate mathematics student could have produced. Does this ignorance, however, divest it of meaning? Not necessarily. Given Fregean compositionality an intuitionist can simply rely upon his general understanding of the language to which Goldbach's conjecture belongs. He understands the logical operators involved in the construction of the conjecture. This understanding gets manifested in his use of the recursive rules for the 'plus' and 'times' operators. This understanding, in turn, gets manifested in his knowledge of what constitutes an actual proof of a sentence with the 'plus' and 'times' operators dominant. The same can be said of 'U'. Because an intuitionist understands the meaning of such words as 'universe', 'constant', and 'expansion', words which are part of the language to which 'U' belongs, he can be said to understand the truth conditions of 'U', but nevertheless not be able to decide the actual truth value of 'U' (that is, not in the absense of an actual demonstration of it). Like Goldbach's conjecture, 'U' is understandable but presently undecidable.[45]

This reading of Dummett certainly makes Chomsky's characterization of mastery of language as unconscious knowledge questionable, at least when interpreted as the basis for understanding undecidable sentences. This reading also

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[45] For a thorough treatment of these issues see Neil Tennant, *Anti-Realism and Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp.111-27.

makes Chomsky's attempt to show that Dummett's views on language are highly misleading, and apparently false, less forceful. But what this reading does not do is show how Dummett's appeal to implicit knowledge avoids Chomsky's point about inner psychological mechanisms. What is interesting here is that Dummett's problems with Chomsky's approach are directly related to his own. He even says as much. Consider this statement by Dummett concerning the difficulties with Chomsky's position:

> Presumably the qualification of the knowledge [of language] as unconscious implies that it cannot be brought into consciousness, at least readily or assuredly, or otherwise it would not differ from explicit knowledge; presumably, also, its possessor will not in general even be able to recognize as correct a formulation of it offered to him. But this merely rules out one way in which the knowledge might be delivered to him: it does nothing to explain how it is delivered - how possession of the unconscious knowledge operates to guide, prompt, or control the speaker's utterances.[46]

Immediately after this criticism Dummett says that "the same [criticism], however, is true of implicit knowledge, explained as comprising an ability to recognize a formulation of its content when presented with one."[47] This definition of implicit knowledge tells us nothing, Dummett says, about how this knowledge is applied when a situation for its application arises. Dummett provides an example from orthography:

> A writer habitually writes 'deferred' and 'proffered', and in all other cases conforms to the rule governing when you should and when you should not double the final consonant of a verb in forming the past tense or past or present participle. He cannot state the rule, however: in what sense can he be said to know it? He may or may not be able to recognize a formulation of the rule when it is offered to him; but what does it matter whether or not he can? When he is writing, no formulation of the rule is before him; in what sense, then, and by what mechanism, is he guided by the rule to spell correctly? Talking about unconscious knowledge does not solve this problem; nor does talking about implicit knowledge.[48]

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[46] Michael Dummett, *The Seas of Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.xi.
[47] Ibid., p.xi.
[48] Ibid., pp.xi-xii.

This is a candid and significant admission. This admission, however, does not affect Chomsky since for him abstract models of the mind, like abstract models of the universe (full of black holes) made in the "Galilean style", need not be constrained by what we can, or cannot, actually recognize or manipulate.[49] Dummett's negative verdict on the demonstrated use of Chomskian unconscious knowledge, and his own implicit knowledge, indicates Dummett's strong commitment to Wittgenstein's critique of the picture of philosophy as at least cognate with the natural sciences. That Dummett keeps on insisting, however, on the importance of implicit knowledge for a theory of meaning (despite the problems with it) indicates Dummett's Fregean tendency toward such scientiftic pretensions in philosophy (this tendency forces Dummett to make a case for implicit knowledge, since *intention* and *motive* underly linguistic utterance and cannot be accounted for by the notion that knowledge of a language is simply an example of a practical ability).[50]

While Chomsky might think that Dummett's problems are not his own, what can be pointed out is that Chomsky's preoccupation with physics as a model for theorizing in linguistics seems to put too much emphasis upon only one side of what we have been calling Hegel's legacy (Chomsky occupies the "objectively conditioned" side). Both Sluga and Chomsky share the following problem in their conflict with Dummett: the solutions which they each present, in the light of what they take to be troubling about Dummett's philosophy of language, put emphasis upon either our scientific (explanatory) tendency (Chomsky) or our non-scientific (descriptive) tendency (Sluga). They fail adequately to treat both tendencies. Dummett's philosophy of language at least attempts to adequately treat both

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[49] Compare Chomsky's somewhat rationalistic approach to theoretical representation with the following: "Long-lived theoretical entities [e.g., black holes], which don't end up being manipulated, commonly turn out to have been wonderful mistakes," Ian Hacking, *Representating and Intervening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.275.

[50] Cf., Michael Dummett, *The Seas of Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.x.

tendencies. This failure on the part of Chomsky and Sluga is illustrated by the fact that while they both find aspects of Dummett's work that is "notable", they do so for opposite reasons.

Pointing out the virtue of Dummett's approach to the question of method in the philosophy of language is important. Its importance lies in his attempt to remain faithful to the requirements of rational explanation and historical description in philosophy, requirements directly associated with our scientific and non-scientific tendencies. But Dummett's own Fregean and Wittgensteinian construal of these requirements lead him, in the words of Crispin Wright, to "an incoherent middle position between those of his two great [philosophical] luminaries."[51]

3. The Acquisition Problem

Following Wittgenstein Dummett maintains that when we attempt to master language, and eventually exercise that mastery, all that is available to us for grasping and conveying meaning is the behaviour of fellow speakers. Neil Tennant observes that this Dummettian conception of language mastery falls into two halves: one half governing the acquisition of meaning, the other governing its manifestation.[52] The first half requires that we refuse to acknowledge any ingredient of a theory of meaning which we are incapable, in principle, of *acquiring* on the basis of observable human behaviour. The distinction between (i) a sentence having a determinate truth-value, and (ii) a sentence having a determinate truth-condition, is important for the anti-realist to maintain here. This is so because a realist could argue that since we are able to understand sentences whose truth-value has yet to be decided we are able to work with sentences which seemingly transgress the limits of observable human speech behaviour. This realist complaint, however, is cut short

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[51] Crispin Wright, *Realism, Meaning & Truth* , Second Edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p.457.
[52] Ibid., p.3.

since the anti-realist does not deny that we have this ability to understand undecidable sentences. As Wright puts it, the anti-realist complaint "is not with the supposition that we do have such understanding, but only with the realist account of it."[53]

It seems, however, that a compositionalist like Chomsky could raise the following problem for a Dummettian anti-realist: since the truth-conditions are what we understand when we understand the meaning of sentences, the appeal to acquisition does not, in itself, necessarily preclude the ability to acquire the concept of 'evidence-transcendent state of affairs' as constituting such conditions. Such an understanding is *acquired* like any other previously undecided sentence by understanding the constituent words and how they are sententially combined. For an anti-realist to respond to this reply by indicating that he does not accept the *realist* account of what our understanding of such statements consists in might be appropriate, but it is not entirely adequate. Dealing with the issues of concept acquisition alone does not adequately address this problem. For mastering language in fact does enable us to acquire and communicate conceptions of states of affairs we have yet to encounter. What is the special problem, therefore, if "the states of affairs in question not merely have not but could not be encountered, or at least could not be recognized for what they are?"[54]

4. The Manifestation Problem

The second half of the Dummettian conception of language mastery is designed, in part, to respond to such a problem (in this sense the acquisition and manifestation requirements are interdependent). The second half requires that we refuse to acknowledge any ingredient of a theory of meaning which could not, in principle, be *manifested* in our observable human behaviour. This trades on

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[53] Ibid., p.16.
[54] Ibid., p.16.

Wittgenstein's insight of treating understanding as a complex of practical abilities, rather than the exercise of some interior mental state. The challenge, then, that the anti-realist presents to the realist trades on this insight: if understanding an expression is to know how it is used, and one demonstrates that one understands it by actually using it, then how can an explanation of understanding as some form of interior mental state conform to Wittgenstein's insight?

Dummett's full-blooded theory of meaning attempts to explain the contents expressed in its object language as from outside of linguistic content. But how far outside? To answer this question is to indicate why going outside of linguistic content altogether is the only satisfactory way of explaining linguistic content.

To speak of going outside of the content of one language by means of the content of a second language would not be going far enough (this is precisely what all modest theories attempt to do). Modest theories of meaning are incapable of imparting an understanding of the language to its audience since they only give the interpretation of the language to someone who already understands its primitive concepts. So, if we stay within the bounds of linguistic content then we are inevitably forced to provide a prior and independent theory of thought to account for how we understand language (if we stay within linguistic content this appeal to a theory of thought is all that is left). From here it is a small step to then conceive of modest theories as viewing language as a code for thought, a view which does not take us beyond the realm of the psychological. We can only hypothesize as to what another person understands by a remark that we make. This hypothetical view goes against conceiving of understanding as being open to view in our use of language (as Frege's anti-psycholigism sought to demonstrate). Because *meaning* is in question, what is needed is not an interpretation of that language which already presupposes what is in question in the first place, but a full-blooded theory which seeks to explain the concepts that are expressed by the primitive terms of the

language. Dummett's view is that to analyse content in a modest way is to postpone the obligation of going beyond the content of the second language in order to explain its content. How is this to be done? Dummett's discussion of what it means to grasp the concept of 'square' provides a possible answer to this question:

> What is it to grasp the concept of *square* , say? At the very least, it is to be able to discriminate between things that are square and those that are not. Such an ability can be ascribed only to one who will, on occasion, treat square things differently from things that are not square; one way, among many other possible ways, of doing this is to apply the word 'square' to square things and not to others. And it can only be by reference to some such use of the word 'square', or at least of some knowledge *about* the word 'square' which would warrant such a use of it, that we can explain what it is to associate the concept *square* with that word. An ability to use the word in such a way, or a suitable piece of knowledge about the word, would, by itself, *suffice* as a manifestation of a grasp of the concept. Even if we grant that there is no difficulty in supposing someone to have, and to manifest, a grasp of the concept antecedently to an understanding of the word, we can make no *use* of this assumption in explaining what it is to understand the word: we cannot appeal to the speaker's prior grasp of the concept in explaining what it is for him to associate that concept with that word. The question whether a grasp of the concepts expressible in language could precede a knowledge of any language thus falls away as irrelevant.[55]

Dummett does not hesitate to employ the concept of *square* in this account. But does this not show that one *cannot* get outside of linguistic content? If Dummett made no mention of *ability* in connection with our grasping of concepts like 'square', then this question would be the appropriate one to ask. But Dummett *does* mention ability, and this indicates what Dummett means by getting outside of linguistic content altogether.

Dummett has a stringent requirement as to what should count as a description of our abilities that would issue in the manifestation requirement being met. This requirement is posited as a result of Dummett's thinking through the implications of the idea that while the equivalence thesis for truth gives a satisfactory basis for an explanation of the role of the word 'true' *within* the

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[55] Michael Dummett, *The Seas of Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp.98-9.

language, it does not provide a basis for having it as the central notion for a theory of meaning *for* the language.[56] Although the impression can be given that full-blooded theories of meaning do not presuppose any concepts at all, this is not so in Dummett's case. A full-blooded theory of meaning attempts to give an account of specific practical abilities which competent speakers of the language exhibit. It is, then, more than a translation manual, and less than an assumption-free explanation of a phenomenon. Dummett, therefore, wants to simultaneously formulate a theory of meaning *within* some language and yet have it be *about* the language. Dummett can accomplish this through a theory of meaning that will *use* words to express the concepts it ascribes to a speaker, while not *mentioning* them. What it mentions is the abilities. To acquire a practical ability, then, is to acquire the proper understanding of a concept, an understanding that is manifested in our behaviour. So, at the basis of Dummett's theory of meaning there is a very disciplined application of the use/mention distinction. It is through the use of this distinction that Dummett's full-blooded theory can go outside of linguistic content.

Does putting emphasis upon understanding as being open to view in our use of the language lead to a form of behaviourism? Can Dummett be accused of leaving out an account of mind in his attempt to go outside of linguistic content? How can Dummett succeed in making a case for the inner role of mind by describing exclusively the outward role of behaviour? John McDowell points out that Dummett's theory of meaning meets this problem by connecting our practical capacity of mastering language to something that is implicitly known. To posit this implicit knowledge is a way to avoid the psychologism associated with modest theories, and the behaviourism associated with focusing attention upon linguistic

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[56] Cf., Michael Dummett, 'What is a Theory of Meaning? (II)' in Gareth Evans, John McDowell (eds), *Truth and Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p.77.

practice.[57] As McDowell understands it Dummett avoids behaviourism because those who participate in linguistic practice rely upon their shared implicit knowledge of the theory of meaning for that language. This knowledge manifests itself through our ability to acknowledge as correct a sentential formulation of what is known when it is presented. On the other hand, Dummett avoids psychologism because this implicit knowledge is always manifested in linguistic activity with no appeal being made to meaning apart from such behaviour. Implicit knowledge, therefore, both guides our linguistic behaviour, and is manifested in that behaviour.

This clarification by McDowell is significant because it makes explicit how the scientific/non-scientific tension gets played out in Dummett's philosophy. We rightly associate anti-psychologism with Frege. We also rightly associate anti-behaviourism with the later Wittgenstein. What we should associate with Dummett are these two important figures, and these two important ideas. But how are we to conceive of this association? It can be understood in two distinct stages. The first stage is directly related to McDowell's point about what constrains Dummett's theory. The avoidance of psychologism can be seen as Dummett's appropriation of Frege's anti-psychologism. The importance of this aspect of Frege's arguments against psychologism are explained by Dummett in a way which connects them to Wittgenstein's later philosophy:

> The arguments Frege puts forward to show, in opposition to psychologism, that thoughts are not contents of the mind, are always made by him to turn on the contrast between the subjective and incommunicable character of 'ideas' and the objective and communicable character of thoughts. It is therefore natural to think that the distinction must collapse once this subjectivist interpretation of 'ideas' is abandoned. But this is a mistake; for Wittgenstein himself draws the boundary around the contents of the mind in precisely the same place as does Frege. Frege conceded that grasping a thought is a mental act, even though the thought grasped is not a content of the mind. Wittgenstein goes further by denying that understanding is a mental process; and, in doing so, he cites as a genuine mental

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[57] Cf., John McDowell, 'In Defense of Modesty', in B. Taylor (ed.), *Michael Dummett: Contributions to Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), p.65.

process exactly what Frege would have classified as such: 'a pain's growing more and less; the hearing of a tune or a sentence.'[58]

This denial of understanding as a mental process does not warrant a behaviouristic reading of Wittgenstein. First, his employment of psychological expressions is too complex for a behaviourist theory; second, there is no hint in Wittgenstein's writings of reducing psychological concepts of behaviouristic ones; and third, in his psychological descriptions he avoids contrasts between mind and body. He frames his psychological remarks so that mind-body problems are precluded from the discussion.[59] So following Dummett's reading we are not to provide a reductionistic account of understanding, despite what might be the anti-psychologistic temptation to do so. At this stage Dummett's use of Frege and Wittgenstein leaves him with the problem of clarifying how a theory of meaning is to be rightfully constrained by these two tendencies.

The second stage is more general and concerns Dummett's take on the nature of explanation in philosophy. In following Frege Dummett is committed to the conception of philosophy as a systematic quest for truth. This Fregean scientific tendency is what motivates Dummett to posit the concept of implicit knowledge. It is posited in order to *explain* how it is that we master and understand language. However, in following Wittgenstein's anti-scientific tendency toward theoretical explanation Dummett is constrained to make a case for implicit knowledge insofar as such knowledge is manifested in linguistic behaviour.

To what extent does Dummett take this Wittgensteinian constraint seriously? Take the example of inference. Wittgenstein's denial that inferring "is a peculiar activity, a process in the medium of the understanding, as it were a brewing of the

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[58] Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.25.
[59] Cf., Joachim Schulte, *Wittgenstein* (Albany: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1992), p.149.

vapour out of which [a] deduction arises"[60] precludes any reference to the mental in getting clear on what inferring really consists in. To agree that a straight line which connects any two points is really already there before we draw it, or that the transitions in the series +2 have already been made prior to writing them down[61] is to fail to heed Wittgenstein's advice: "Seperate the feelings (gestures) of agreement, from what you *do* with the proof."[62] To think of inference, then, as a mental process that *traces* an immutable pattern of thought that has prior existence either in the mind or in a separate realm of thought is to be driven less by the *doing* of the proof and more by the *feeling* one gains by producing it.

It is for reasons such as these that Dummett is compelled to link understanding with abilities manifested in public behaviour. However, Dummett's compulsion is only to *link* , not to *identify* , understanding with ability. It is only by taking seriously the *idea* of a theory of meaning that we, following Dummett, can remain as committed as possible to our Fregean tendency. Such a commitment will keep us from adopting the "radical consequences" of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, consequences which, according to Dummett, themselves *need* to be substantiated by a theory of meaning. And the positing of implicit knowledge is Dummett's way of clarifying meaning as rightfully constrained by these two tendencies.

The question remains, however, whether Dummett can clarify meaning by this appeal to implicit knowledge. One line of response to this question suggests that Dummett's manifestation requirement leads to serious problems. Consider the following dilemma: either there is nothing in someone's understanding of a statement which cannot be manifested in his actual use of it, or his understanding is

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[60]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* Revised Edition (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1994), §I.17.
[61] Cf., Ibid., §I.21.
[62] Ibid., §I.24.

simply an inner state in which a mysterious "brewing of the vapours" takes place. It is not difficult to become sceptical about conceiving understanding in this latter way. So we are left with the manifestation of implicit knowledge. Now, take Dummett's example of the concept 'square' as understood from outside of linguistic content. We are said to understand this concept in terms of a practical capacity to treat square things in a certain way. For example, I show that I understand the concept 'square' as it relates to a large box by picking it up, rather than rolling it along the ground. I could roll it along the ground rather than pick it up, just as I could pick up a large sphere rather than roll it along the ground. But in this instance of wanting to move an object that is square I show that I understand the concept 'square' by picking it up since cubical objects are constituted geometrically in such a way that picking them up, rather than rolling them, would make them easier to move.

Yet this very example indicates the ambigous character of what gets manifested in my behaviour. The behaviour of picking up a square box could be an equally good manifestation of an indefinite number of different pieces of implicit knowledge dealing with square objects. For example, picking up a square box could be a manifestation of how to treat square objects when you desire to move such objects efficiently. But it could also be a manifestation of how you move precious cargo that is within a square box in order not to break it. McDowell is correct to point out that given a stable propensity we can use further behaviour to rule out quite a number of competing candidates. However, no set of finite performances can eliminate them all, and, as McDowell puts it, "finite sets of performances are all we get."[63] The problem is articulated very clearly by Crispin Wright:

> The point is now generally received that there is no behaviour, or syndrome of behaviour, which may be regarded a priori as distinctive of the subject's possession of any particular belief. Beliefs which typically lead to certain types of course of

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[63] John McDowell, 'In Defense of Modesty' in B. Taylor (ed.), *Michael Dummett: Contributions to Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), p.67.

action may equally find expression in other, quite contrary courses of action if we imagine appropriate changes in others of the subject's background beliefs and in his framework of desires...[T]he linguistic behaviour which expresses someone's understanding of a particular statement will be a function not just of that understanding but also of other beliefs he has about the world and about his audience, as well as his background intentions and desires. Meaning thus cannot be 'exhaustively' manifest in use; to suppose that it can is to make the same error as those who, in the tradition of Gilbert Ryle, attempted to construe intentional states as dispositions.[64]

Wright does think that this objection does affect one construal of the anti-realist position on the identification of meaning and use: the relation between ability and behaviour.[65] However, Wright thinks that the real issue is at one remove from this construal: the relation between understanding and ability. According to Wright there are, then, three levels that need to be analysed so as to clarify the relation between language and human action: the level of understanding, the level of ability, and the level of behaviour.

When the anti-realist poses a challenge to the realist to indicate a potential manifestation of a realist understanding of a statement she is not, according to Wright's construal, asking for the *behaviour* that would be actually manifested. She is asking for the possible *abilities* that would manifest it. It is only the relation between ability and behaviour where "the shadow of holism falls"[66] (the problem of behavioural indeterminacy), not between understanding and ability. To focus attention, then, upon recognitional abilities which are not *conclusively* manifestable in behaviour "is beside the point."[67]

Whatever benefits are gained from focusing the realist/anti-realist debate upon the relation between understanding and ability are minimal at best. One of the supposed benefits of Wright's construal of the debate is the clarification of the kinds

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[64] Crispin Wright, *Realism, Meaning & Truth* Second Edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p.23.
[65] Cf., Ibid., p.23.
[66] Ibid., p.23.
[67] Ibid., p.23.

of abilities that we, as human speakers, possibly have given the notion that understanding is a complex set of practical abilities. Without any reference to behavioural manifestation Wright can be said to have diffused the realist challange by showing, through a consideration of our human abilities, that a realist conception of understanding cannot be connected with *any* practical ability (we cannot demonstrate, through an exercise of a practical ability, that we understand a statement whose truth-conditions transcend our recognitional capacities). Wright can be said to have at least narrowed down, very generally, the range of what we can be said to understand (a narrowing which precludes realist understanding). But this general narrowing down is all that Wright can achieve through his construal of the realist/anti-realist debate.

Wright is still faced with the original manifestation problem of making sense of what actually *does* get manifested through our practical abilities. The reason why Wright is still faced with this problem is because his construal of the debate views the realism question as concerned with content specification. So, however much "the shadow of holism" does not affect the point of the realist/anti-realist discussion as Wright conceives it, in the end the point about what actually gets manifested in our behaviour becomes central: what we implicity know manifests itself, through certain practical abilities, in our actual behaviour. It is only by focusing attention upon behaviour that the content of our statements can be specified. And, as Wright himself points out, "it is between the ability and its behavioural manifestation that the shadow of holism falls."[68]

To talk about ability, rather than behaviour, is not to by-pass the question of behaviour altogether. To talk about ability is to talk about knowledge. And given the constraints that Dummett's theory of meaning presents, to talk about knowledge is to talk about implicit knowledge: the ability to understand the meaning of our

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[68] Ibid., p.23.

language is part of the content of what we implicitly know. To talk meaningfully about ability, therefore, is to direct our attention to behaviour since it is only through our observable behaviour that we manifest what we know implicitly. But to direct our attention to behaviour is to confront the specter of holism as it is presented in McDowell's criticism.

At this point an appeal can be made to the idea that the implicit knowledge of a theory of meaning is supposed to *guide* linguistic practice.[69] If proper emphasis is put upon the phenomenon of guidance, so this appeal goes, then we can possibly avoid the problems about manifestation that we have considered. However, if the acknowledgement of the correct use of the concept of 'square', for example, is an exercise of being guided by implicit knowledge, then how does this appeal actually explain how it is that we *are* guided by this knowledge? Is not this acknowledgement an example of the very capacity which implicit knowledge was supposed to explain? The appeal to guidance as a way to avoid the problem of manifestation becomes problematic since the only way to explain how implicit knowledge guides us is through a consideration of our linguistic behaviour. Enter again the problem of manifestation.

In the light of the problems with acquisition and manifestation it is easy to indicate how the constraints which Dummett's use of Frege and Wittgenstein present for him lead Dummett into "an incoherent middle position between those of his two great [philosophical] luminaries." The appeal to manifestation can be seen as Dummett's attempt to follow Frege's anti-psychologism: the meaning of language must be open to view. Again, the appeal to guidance can be seen as Dummett's attempt to follow Wittgenstein's anti-behaviourism: there are general facts of nature which compel us to speak and act in generally uniform ways (there is

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[69] Cf., John McDowell, 'In Defense of Modesty' in B. Taylor (ed.), *Michael Dummett: Contributions to Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), p.67.

something in us that allows us to "speak a little"). But as we have seen the implications of trying to forge a theory of meaning with these two constraints have led to an incoherent epistemological position (implicit knowledge). Its incoherence consists in its inability to explain how the possession of implicit knowledge operates to control a speaker's utterances. The operation of this knowledge can only be understood as either guiding linguistic behaviour, or being manifested in linguistic behaviour. And both concepts in Dummett's philosophy of language are flawed.

With these problems do we then say that the implicit knowledge that we have of our language is, in the end, merely an hypothesis? If so, then what difference is there between this admission and Chomsky's scientific approach to theoretical representation? In fact, since the appeal to manifestation produces these problems, it seems that the appeal to acquisition is all that we have left. If so, then Dummett would have a hard time avoiding the realist implications of the acquisition argument (that a conception of evidence-transcendence is something that we *do* acquire).

The difficulty with implicit knowledge provides us with a reason to be somewhat sceptical about the coherence of Dummett's theory of meaning. In fact, these problems may indicate that Wittgenstein's own attitude toward theories of meaning for language is, in the end, well founded. If Dummett is right to say that in the light of Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing the *only* way that a theory of meaning could possibly succeed is to be a theory about grasping sense,[70] then Dummett's own problematic theory seems to indicate that a theory of meaning is, in fact, *mute* : sense can only be shown, not stated in a theory.

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[70] Cf., Michael Dummett, 'Frege and Wittgenstein' in Irving Block (ed.), *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1981), p.32.

Conclusion

There are three distinct problems with Dummett's theory of meaning. The first problem is epistemological. Dummett invokes the concept of implicit knowledge to explain how we are able to learn and master the language that we speak. The coherency of this concept is crucial for Dummett. The only way to by-pass the negative semantic implications of Wittgenstein's say/show distinction is to explain how we grasp sense. And to grasp sense depends upon our implicit knowledge of the meaning of the language that we speak. Dummett's argument for by-passing Wittgenstein's say/show distinction is in the form of a disjunctive syllogism: either a theory of meaning can obtain as a theory of how it is that we grasp sense, or a theory of sense is mute. That there are problems with the first disjunct, problems associated with implicit knowledge, suggests that we can infer the second disjunct and conclude that Wittgenstein is right: a theory of sense is mute.

The second problem is conceptual. The best way to interpret Dummett's philosophy of language is within the context of a tension between our scientific and non-scientific tendencies. The first tendency influences Dummett to conceive of philosophy as (1) a sector in the quest for the truth, and (2) as providing explanations for baffling problems. A theory of meaning provides the explanatory basis for this purpose. The second tendency influences Dummett to put a constraint upon our theorizing about language. Wittgenstein's later philosophy functions, for Dummett, as a reminder that such theorizing cannot be produced apart from how language is actually used. What is problematic about this tension for Dummett is that it influences him to posit the concept of implicit knowledge.

The third problem is interpretative. Dummett's attempt to produce a theory of meaning is based upon his interpretation of Frege as a philosopher of language

and of Wittgenstein as a full-blooded conventionalist. Both of these interpretations are questionable. In the concluding section of this study emphasis will be put on Dummett's interpretation of Wittgenstein. If it can be shown that Dummett's conventionalist reading of Wittgenstein is at least highly questionable, then this might be good grounds for arguing that Dummett's problematic theory of meaning is a *reduction ad absurdum* of his interpretation of Wittgenstein.

1. Dummett and Wittgenstein

Dummett argues against a certain form of conventionalism in his review of Wittgenstein's *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* . Dummett's argument is based upon a distinction he makes between 'modified' and 'full-blooded' conventionalism. On the 'modified' conception (once held by the logical positivists) one can divide necessary propositions into two classes: (1) direct conventional propositions, and (2) subsidiary conventional propositions which are derived from (1). On the 'full-blooded' conception there is only one class of necessary propositions: direct conventional statements.

Dummett believes that 'modified' conventionalism is the only reasonable position to adopt if you want to avoid a non-stipulative conception of mathematical truth. However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to maintain this position. Dummett argues that 'modified' conventionalism must either collape into 'full-blooded' conventionalism, or renounce the notion that all necessary propositions are conventions. The main problem with the 'modified' version is in identifying the source of the belief that the consequences derived from direct conventions are also conventions. If the source of this belief is itself based upon another convention, then you end up with the 'full-blooded' version. If the source of this belief is not based upon another convention, then the 'modified' conventionalist is left with the problem of explaining how one conventional proposition follows from another without making appeal to metaphysical ideas.

Dummett suggests that one way to retain conventionalism, while avoiding the problems of the 'modified' version, is to adopt the 'full-blooded' version. Dummett believes that this position was held by Wittgenstein in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* and used by him as a contribution towards the foundations dispute in the philosophy of mathematics between platonism and the various forms of constructivism.

Wittgenstein's conventionalism, according to Dummett, consists of the following basic ideas. There is no mental or material fact of the matter which compels us to accept a proof when we are presented with one. Now it seems initially reasonable to assume that once we have accepted the axioms from which a proof starts we have no further active role to play in our production of the proof. The only role that we have to play is in recognising the various transitions we make in the proof as applications of general rules of inference. Wittgenstein objects to this assumption. Somone may, right from the start, accept the axioms and rules of inference involved in a proof, and yet not accept the proof itself. We are free at each step of the proof to accept or reject it. In this sense we always have an active role to play in our production of the proof. No mental or material fact compels us to accept the proof. If, however, we decide to accept a proof then "we confer necessity on the theorem proved; we 'put it in the archives' and will count nothing as telling against it. In doing this we are making a new decision, and not merely making explicit a decision we had already made implicitly."[1] Necessity, then, is given by a free decision.

Dummett's Wittgenstein, then, wants us to reject the idea that the truth of a statement derives its necessity in advance. He refuses to talk about what would have been true despite not having recognized a statement as true. Since Wittgenstein refuses to speak of necessary truth from any external point of view (outside of

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[1] Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.171.

linguistic content), Dummett maintains that from Wittgenstein's "full-blooded conventionalism" on necessity we get his "full-blown internalism" on truth:

> If I have interpreted Wittgenstein aright, his doctrine is internalism with a vengeance; it could hardly be called internal *realism* . To say that we cannot intelligibly talk about what is true independently of what we recognize as true is, in effect, to hold that there is no admissible notion of truth other than that of being accepted as true. The internalist thesis that necessity attaches to a statement only in virtue of its being treated as necessary proves to require holding also that truth can attach to a statement only in virtue of *its* being treated as true...Truth *is* to be equated with being...treated as true.[2]

This "full-blown internalism" is, according to Dummett, something which cannot be *said* . To speak of truth as only *within* the confines of linguistic content would be self-refuting: it would be an attempt to speak about language from an external point of view. This vantage point is inaccessible. But, it is also the case that to speak of truth as *outside* of the confines of linguistic content would be an attempt to say the unsayable. In this sense realism and idealism, for Dummett, coincide. But they cannot be established because that would be an attempt to say the unsayable. Yet, while the early Wittgenstein believed that realism and idealism coincided, he did not try to find a metaphysical compromise between them but tried to find a way out of the dichotomy. Dummett, however, tries to find a metaphysical compromise.

Dummett observes that from the practice of deductive inference we are forced to form a conception of how things are independently of our own observations. His own inventive formulation of this compromise comes at the end of his 1959 review of Wittgenstein's *Remarks* :

> But it seems that we ought to interpose between the platonist and the constructivist picture an intermediate picture, say of objects springing into being in response to our probing. We do not *make* the objects but must accept them as we find them (this corresponds to the proof imposing itself on us); but they were not already there for our statements to be true or false of before we carried out the investigations which brought them into being. (This is of course intended only as a picture; but its

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[2] Michael Dummett, 'Wittgenstein on necessity: some reflections' in Bob Hale and Peter Clark (eds), *Reading Putnam* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995), p.56.

point is to break what seems to me the false dichotomy between the platonist and the constructivist pictures which surreptitiously dominates our thinking about the philosophy of mathematics).[3]

Dummett thinks that this attempt at a compromise between the platonist and constructivist pictures is possible, despite his use of Wittgenstein's philosophical ideas. He does not think that a use of Wittgenstein's ideas depends upon his fundamental belief that philosophy must never criticise but only describe. There are three reasons why we should, according to Dummett, question the legitimacy of Wittgenstein's fundamental belief. We have previously considered the first reason in the introduction to this study. It would lead to a breakdown in communication. Dummett's position is that this reduces Wittgenstein's philosophy as presented in his *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* to absurdity. If we hold that anyone is entitled to lay down, by personal fiat, that a certain form of statement is logically true, then it will become impossible to give a uniform account of the use of our language at all.

The second reason concerns Wittgenstein's rule following considerations. We maintain our practice of following rules, Dummett thinks, not only because it is what society expects us to do, but because "it appears to have a rationale, that is, to be a method of ascertaining how things in fact are. The full-blown internalist would have us think that rationale an illusion; if we believe the internalist, only inertia can make us go on reasoning as before."[4] Dummett invokes Euler's proof concerning the bridges at Königsberg to explain this point about the rationale of rule-following. He thinks this proof is a good example of a deductive practice which forces us to form a conception of how things are independently of actually observing them. The proof demonstrates that even given a certain configuration of bridges, if

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[3] Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.185.
[4] Michael Dummett, 'Wittgenstein on necessity: some reflections' in Bob Hale and Peter Clark (eds), *Reading Putnam* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995), pp.60-61.

we did not observe a person passing a bridge twice, still the verification that he did cross every bridge entitles us to assert that we must have crossed some bridge at least twice. This proof is a good example of an indirect verification, one which entitles us to maintain that "in coming to engage in the practice of accepting and applying such proofs [as Euler's] we *extend* our notion of what justifies the assertion of such a statement...We are [therefore] entitled to assert that the walker crossed at least one bridge twice because the proof shows that that is how it must have been; we did not, but we *could have* , observed it to be so at the time."[5] The example of the bridges at Königsberg demonstrates, for Dummett, that there are patterns that underly deductive reasoning. Inference involves the discernment of pattern. But "the pattern is not, in general, *imposed* : it is *there* to be discerned."[6]

The third reason also concerns Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations, but is more damaging for Wittgenstein than Dummett's stress on pattern discernment. Wittgenstein's extreme internalism on truth is manifested, Dummett thinks, in his saying that of a calculation that we have not made, nor ever will make, that even God does not know what the result would have been if we carried it out. There simply is nothing for God to know. For Wittgenstein it is only our performing a calculation and "putting it in the archives" that constitutes what we take to be its result. Take the simple case of '5 + 7 = 12'. On this view either (a) it is not determinate what would count as performing one of the steps correctly (adding 5 and 7) until that step was actually done, or (b) it is determinate what would count as performing one of the steps correctly (adding 5 and 7), but that it is not determinate what the actual outcome of such a step would be prior to its performance:

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[5] Ibid., p.60.

[6] Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.198.

It is only our doing the calculation and 'putting it in the archives' that constitutes its result as being that obtained by doing it correctly; so, if we never do that calculation [cf. 5 + 7 = 12], there *is* no one correct result, and hence God cannot be said to know what that result is. There is, in other words, no determinate result which is that which we should get if we were to perform the calculation correctly according to our criteria for correctness.[7]

This is the only conclusion that can be drawn from what Dummett describes as "an unflinching application of Wittgenstein's ideas about rules."[8] These ideas, however, embody a huge mistake. The mistake concerns Wittgenstein's premise that there is nothing to truth beyond our acknowledgement of it. Wittgenstein's internalism on truth derives, Dummett argues, from the correct premise that there is nothing by which we judge something to be a correct application of a rule, to the conclusion that if we never apply a particular rule in a given case, then there is nothing that would have been a correct application of it. But in order to get this conclusion you require a hidden premise, namely, that there is nothing to truth beyond our acknowledgement of it. The huge mistake here is that Wittgenstein's argument for his position begs the question: "global internalism is required as a premise to take us from the epistemology of rules to their metaphysical standing."[9]

In 1959 we find Dummett arguing that the philosophy in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* leads to the sceptical conclusion that communication would be in constant danger of breaking down. In 1995 we find Dummett arguing that Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations embody a huge mistake because of the premise that there is nothing to truth beyond our acknowledgement of it, a premise that is totally implausable and "induces a scepticism so profound that few can swallow it."[10] Both early and late Dummett has held this sceptical interpretation

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[7] Michael Dummett, 'Wittgenstein on necessity: some reflections' in Bob Hale and Peter Clark (eds), *Reading Putnam* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995), p.63.
[8] Ibid., p.63.
[9] Ibid., p.64.
[10] Ibid., p.63.

as the major difficulty with Wittgenstein's philosophy. Dummett, then, would agree with Kripke that Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations has produced the most radical form of pyrrhonism that has yet to be seen in the history of philosophy.[11] This scepticism indicates for Dummett that there must be something seriously wrong with Wittgenstein's fundamental belief that philosophy must only describe and never explain.

2. Conventionalism without Scepticism

Dummett's interpretation of Wittgenstein is not without its problems. The first problem concerns Dummett's interpretation of Wittgenstein as a full-blooded conventionalist. This interpretation is misleading since it misidentifies Wittgenstein's conventionalism and leads to conceptual problems.

Throughout Wittgenstein's remarks on the foundations of mathematics we are presented with the idea that a new proof produces a new concept. In this sense the study of mathematics is the study of concept formation. Consider the following:

> When I said that a proof introduces a new concept, I meant something like: the proof puts a new paradigm among the paradigms of the language; like when someone mixes a special reddish blue, somehow settles the special mixture of the colours and gives it a name. But even if we are inclined to call a proof such a new paradigm - what is the exact similarity of the proof to such a concept-model? One would like to say: the proof changes the grammar of our language, changes our concepts. It makes new connexions, and it creates the concept of these connections. (It does not establish that they are there; they do not exist until it makes them).[12]

There is a distinction at work here between (a) a proof of a theorem in an established proof-system and (b) a proof which creates an entirely new proof-system. In (a) we have no freedom in our applications insofar as we understand the rules of the system;[13] whereas in (b) we are dealing with a novel combination of familiar words

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[11] Cf., Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein: On Rules and Private Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982).

[12] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* Revised Edition (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1994), III.31.

[13] "The edifice of rules must be *complete* , if we are to work with a concept at all - *We cannot make any discoveries in syntax* . For, only the group of rules *defines* the sense of our signs, and any alteration (e.g.

(for example, Goldbach's Conjecture). In the case of (b) a new system has to be created in order to make these familiar words meaningful. Before such a system is created, if at all, to believe in, say, Goldbach's Conjecture is a different kind of belief than a belief in a proof of a theorem in an established proof-system.[14] A proof of whether this theorem is either true or false would amount to the production of a new grammar which creates the rules of how the expressions which make up this theorem are used. In this sense "it is impossible to make discoveries of novel rules holding of a form already familiar to us (say the sine of an angle). If they are new rules, then it is not the old form."[15]

Dummett finds this distinction difficult to accept. He thinks, in contrast, that the meaning of words, with our established rules of inference, pre-determine what is to count as a proof, whether in an old or new proof-system. Dummett thinks that when we are face to face with a proof we have no other alternative but to accept the proof if we desire to remain faithful to the understanding we already have of the mathematical expressions contained in it. To this fact Dummett presents the case of a primitive people who count but do not have the concept of addition. Such a people could count that there are five boys and seven girls in the room. But the only way that they could discover that there are twelve people in the room would be to count the entire group. Since they lack the concept of addition there might be the sceptical possibility that they could, by counting, reach the conclusion that, on one occasion, there are twelve people in the room, and on another occasion thirteen

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supplementation) of the rules means an alteration of the sense. Just as we can't alter the marks of a concept without altering the concept itself. (Frege)." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), §154.

[14] "What does it mean to *believe* Goldbach's theorem? What does this belief consist in? In a feeling of certainty as we state or hear the theorem? That does not interest us. I don't even know how far this feeling may be caused by the proposition itself. How does the belief connect with this proposition? Let us look and see what are the consequences of this belief, where it takes us. 'It makes me search for a proof of the proposition.' - Very well; and now let us look and see what your searching really consists in. Then we shall know what belief in the proposition amounts to." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1978), p.381.

[15] Ibid., p.378.

people. Dummett wants to argue that in this situation even before we met such a people and before we taught them the principle of addition, it would have been true that if they had counted five boys, seven girls, and thirteen children, they would have been wrong even according to the criteria of counting they acknowledge as correct. This is based on the underlying idea that someone who counts as we do, but who lacks the concept of addition, is tacitly committed to the rule that 5+7=12. This obtains for Dummett because the meaning of the numbers themselves determine the rules which apply to them. It is not the case that the rules determine the meaning of the numbers (as in the case of Wittgenstein's conception of rules).

There are two problems with Dummett's example. The first problem is over the contrast between adding versus conducting an empirical experiment. The question is over whether we can actually speak about people who count the same way as we do but who lack the concept of addition. The concepts of 'counting' and 'calculating' are internally, not externally, related. Counting and calculating are two different ways to get a sum, but they are internally related insofar as the relations between the numbers involved in each case are identical. This internal relation is fundamental to our understanding of the meaning of number words. Dummett treats the non-additive (non-calculating) form of counting as an implicit arithmetical operation. If, however, this community's form of counting was conceptually divorced from the concept of calculation, then this community would not be engaged in a grammatical arithmetical operation but in an empirical experiment. The criteria used for determining whether they had counted correctly would be empirical (whether a child was seen to enter or leave the room). If it made no sense to say that a mistake had been made according to those criteria, then no mistake had been made. To think otherwise, like Dummett does, and suggest that

they had nonetheless committed an indiscernible error is to impose our method of counting onto their own activity.[16]

Dummett remarks that if we came upon such a people we would know what kind of arguments we could present to them to show that in such circumstances they must have miscounted on one occasion and that whenever there are five boys and seven girls there must be twelve children. If Dummett's primitives did understand our arguments and adopted our criteria then Dummett's remark would make perfect sense. This, however, is far from concluding with Dummett that we would thereby have shown them that in such circumstances they must have miscounted on one occasion. This new criterion of correctness is constitutive of what we call addition. Therefore Dummett should have concluded that by learning how to add these primitive people had acquired the rules of calculation as their own criterion of correctness, not that they could be shown that they had previously miscounted. There is a contrast here between two completely different types of activity, not between two different versions of the same operation. The one activity is normative, the other is empirical. Wittgenstein is making the same point:

> When we say 2+3 *must* be 5, this shows that we have determined what is to count as correct; the *must* is a sign of a calculation. The difference between a calculation and an experiment is shown by our saying that a result of counting other than 5 is incorrect.[17]

There is no *must* for Dummett's community, only a very high empirical probability that 5+7=12.

The second problem is over the contrast between two different arithmetical systems. On this contrast Dummett's example of this primitive people hightlights the difference between two different methods of counting. For Dummett the

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[16] Cf., Stuart Shanker, *Wittgenstein and the Turning-Point in the Philosophy of Mathematics* (New York: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1987), p.296.

[17] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1932-1935* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), p.160.

meaning of number-words are identical in the two different systems of counting despite the fact that one system has the concept of addition while the other does not. However, the introduction of new rules of grammar changes the senses of the terms involved: you are not dealing with the same meanings of number-words in two contrary systems. The meaning of a numerical term is determined by its use in a system, and it is only when the rules are identical that two terms are said to be synonymous. On this reading it makes no sense to say that the construction of a new system can reveal mistakes in the old one. The mathematician who switches from one mathematical system to another (one with the concept of addition, one without) does not discover that he had made 'mistakes' in his previous employment of the calculation system. The same can be said of a scientist who switches from a Euclidean to a non-Euclidean geometry in thinking about the concept of space. You do not move from one mathematical system to another simply by extending the former. Such systems are grammatically autonomous. Insofar as Dummett has misunderstood Wittgenstein's grammatical approach to mathematical propositions, to that extent does his example of the primitive people fail to undermine the distinction between an established and a new proof-system.

3. Wittgenstein and the Foundations Dispute

The second problem is the most interesting, and potentially most damaging, for Dummett's interpretation and appropriation of Wittgenstein. It concerns his understanding of Wittgenstein's remarks on mathematics and how they relate to the foundations dispute. If it can be shown that Dummett is wrong on one of the most important aspects of Wittgenstein philosophical contribution, then this might indicate that Dummett's own use of Wittgenstein's ideas is based upon a deep misunderstanding.

Dummett says he felt "stimulated and frustrated"[18] by Wittgenstein's *Remarks* . This frustration is based, in part, on what Dummett thinks are the major problems with the book:

> Many of the thoughts are expressed in a manner which the author recognised as inaccurate or obscure; some passages contradict others; some are quite inconclusive; some raises objections to ideas which Wittgenstein held or had held which are not themselves stated clearly in the volume; other passages again, particularly those on consistency and on Gödel's theorem, are of poor quality or contain definite errors.[19]

It is significant that Dummett mentions Wittgenstein's passages on consistency and Gödel's theorem as examples of those that are of poor quality and contain definite errors. Its significance turns on Dummett's own take on the philosophical aspect of Gödel's theorem. It follows from this theorem that our notion of 'natural number' cannot be fully expressed by means of any formal system. Dummett thinks that the *philosophical* difficulty of this result is to assess precisely its epistemological significance. It seems intuitively right to speak of epistemology here. For it is hard not to think that the Peano axioms answer to an independent subject-matter which confers truth-values on a Gödel sentence and its negation. For Dummett the issue comes down, then, to whether Gödel's theorem undermines the intuitionistic notion that the sense of a mathematical statement is to be given in terms of a proof of it which we can recognize.[20]

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[18] The extent of this frustration is illustrated by what Dummett says about the actual writing of the review: "I'll tell you the experience that I had: I had tried to write this review in the usual way, with the book beside me and looking up passages in it, and I found that I could not do it. I couldn't get a grip on Wittgenstein's thought to determine just what he was saying. When I tried to summarise his views and quote bits in illustration, I found it all crumbling in my fingers. So I put the book away and deliberately thought no more about the review for about three months. Then, with my now impared memory of the book, I wrote the review - deliberately without opening the book again; because then some themes came into sharp focus which I know would grow hazy once more as soon as I opened the book again. Finally, I inserted some references. Although the book made a great impact on me, I felt it to be a far less finished work than the *Investigations* - not merely as a piece of writing, but as a piece of thought." Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp.173-74.

[19] Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.166.

[20] Cf., Ibid., p.186. Dummett's own response to this is that Gödel's theorem does not undermine an anti-realist approach to number theory. To think that it does is to conceive of the concept of 'proof' to

But how does Wittgenstein respond to Gödel's theorem? "My task is," Wittgenstein says, "not to talk about (e.g.) Gödel's proof, but to by-pass it."[21] One of the "definite errors" involved here could be that in by-passing this proof Wittgenstein failed to understand the problems involved in the foundations dispute. If he had he would have realized that Gödel's theorem is epistemologically signficant. He would have also realized that this theorem actually contributes toward Wittgenstein's challange to Hilbert's Programme, namely, that the formalization of mathematical thought is misguided, and that the need to demonstrate the reliability of mathematical reasoning by the production of a finitary consistenty proof is unnecessary.

Dummett seems to be on good ground when he points to the epistemological significance of Gödel's theorem. On one interpretation what the theorem did was to raise again the deep sceptical worries which the paradoxes in mathematics initially raised for Hilbert. It made him re-consider whether there is no *ignorabimus* in mathematics.[22] In this sense the essence of Hilbert's Programme lies in its epistemological focus. Dummett's reaction to Gödel's theorem is entirely natural given the epistemological emphasis in the foundations dispute. Wittgenstein's remarks, therefore, suffer from not considering this emphasis.

However, fairly recent work in Wittgenstein scholarship suggests that this reading of Wittgenstein fails to consider the philosophical basis for wanting to by-pass Gödel's proof. As Shanker argues, to understand Wittgenstein's reaction to Gödel is to understand Wittgenstein's reaction to the consistency problem and

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narrowly. For Dummett the intuitionist is right to point out that our intuitive conception of 'proof' cannot be identified with the concept of proof in a formal system. It may be that no formal system can ever succeed in embodying all the principles of proof that we should intuitively accept. If the sense of a mathematical statement is to be given in terms of 'proof', then it should be in terms of the inherently vague notion of an *intuitively* acceptable proof.

[21] Lugwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* , Revised Edition (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1994), VII, §19.

[22] Cf., David Hilbert, 'On the Infinite' in Paul Benacerraf and Hilary Putnam (eds), *Philosophy of Mathematics* , Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.200.

Hilbert's Programme.[23] But to understand this reaction one must consider Wittgenstein's general reaction to the very idea of scepticism.

Extending a line of thought which began in Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* , and appeared again at 6.51 in the *Tractatus* , Wittgenstein says in *Philosophical Remarks* that "we can only ask [a question] from a standpoint from which a question is possible. From which a doubt is possible...We cannot ask about that which alone makes questions possible at all. Not about what first gives the system a foundation."[24] Wittgenstein says this in the context of a discussion about the significance of the question 'Does a+(b+c)=(a+b)+c?' If we take this question purely algebraically, then the question means nothing. Why? Because for Wittgenstein mathematical propositions are rules of syntax which fix the use of mathematical concepts rather than state mathematical facts.[25] This is why Hilbert's Programme of metamathematics rests upon a misunderstanding. If metamathematical propositions are taken as mathematical propositions, then as norms of representation (rules of syntax) they cannot be about anything. To think that metamathematics constitutes a mathematical discipline which investigates proofs rather than numbers is to conceive of mathematical propositions as describing mathematical facts. This does not mean, for Wittgenstein, that metamathematics could not be eventually incorporated into the family of mathematics. What it does mean is that if it is incorporated then it should be seen not as a higher but as a different calculus:

I can play with the chessmen according to certain rules. But I can also invent a game in which I play with the rules themselves. The pieces in my game are now the rules of chess, and the rules of the game are, say, the laws of logic. *In that case I have yet*

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[23] Cf., Stuart Shanker, *Wittgenstein and the Turning-Point in the Philosophy of Mathematics* (New York: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1987); and his 'Wittgenstein's Remarks on the Significance of Gödel's Theorem' in Stuart Shanker (ed), *Gödel's Theorem in Focus* (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp.155-256.
[24] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), §168.
[25] Cf., Ibid., §160.

another game and not a metagame . What Hilbert does is mathematics and not metamathematics. It's another calculus, just like any other.[26]

As rules of syntax mathematical propositions provide the basis for questions (and answers). They cannot be the object of our questioning. This notion gives sense to Wittgenstein's idea that "mathematics as such is always measure, never thing measured."[27] To think that a contradiction calls into question the reliability of a system of mathematical reasoning is to be misled by an analogy: that mathematical propositions are descriptive of an extra-mathematical reality in the same way as empirical propositions are descriptive of a physical reality. But to think of mathematics as syntax is to take a different view on the rise of a contradiction: "if inconsistencies were to arise between the rules of the game of mathematics, it would be the easiest thing in the world to remedy. All we have to do is to make a new stipulation to cover the case in which the rules conflict, and the matter's resolved...The truth of the matter is that the calculus *qua* calculus is all right."[28]

This provides the key to understanding Wittgenstein's reaction to Gödel's proof. Shanker argues that this proof demonstrated that given the mathematical parameters laid down by Hilbert it would be impossible to construct a finitary consistency proof. But, what Gödel's proof did not establish was the unintelligibility of Hilbert's Programme. The central point here is that Gödel's theorem succeeds in undermining Hilbert's Programme only by assuming, at the outset, that Hilbert's sceptical dilemma is cogent, not unintelligible. How does this relate to Wittgenstein's desire to by-pass Gödel's proof? For Wittgenstein it was not so much the proof *qua* proof that is important. Rather it is the *situation* into which the

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[26] Ibid., p.319.
[27] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* Revised Edition (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1994), III.75.
[28] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), p.319.

proof brings us.[29] What situation is this? It is the situation which prompted Hilbert to pose the kind of question which he then tried to answer metamathematically; where the distinction between a mathematical and a philosophical investigation is blurred; and where philosophical problems can be solved mathematically. This situation is responsible for the possibility which Gödel makes us aware of through his discussion. This possibility is Gödel's platonist interpretation of his theorem, an interpretation which is fully articulated in his paper 'What is Cantor's continuum problem?'[30] Wittgenstein's problem with Gödel's theorem is with the latter's belief that he had demonstrated the *existence* of true but formally undecidable mathematical propositions. Only by assuming the intelligibility of Hilbert's sceptical concerns could Gödel interpret his theorem as a warrant for a platonist theory of number.

Wittgenstein's remarks on Gödel's theorem are based upon Wittgenstein's belief that one can only resolve a philosophical problem *philosophically* . In this case a philosophical investigation would consist in identifying and removing the sourses of confusion which has led to the belief that deep sceptical worries over the foundation of mathematics are intelligible. Contrast this with Dummett's own critical interpretation of Wittgenstein on the relation between philosophy and mathematics:

[For Wittgenstein] philosophy and mathematics have nothing to say to one another; no mathematical discovery can have any bearing on the philosophy of mathematics. It would seem that he is theoretically committed also to the converse, that no philosophical opinion could, or at least ought to, affect the procedure of the mathematician [yet]...in his discussion of Cantor he displays no timidity about 'interfering with the mathematicians'. I think that there is no ground for Wittgenstein's segregation of philosophy from mathematics but that this springs only from a general tendency of his to regard discourse as split up into a number of

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[29] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* Revised Edition (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1994), VII.22.

[30] Cf., Paul Benacerraf and Hilary Putnam (eds), *Philosophy of Mathematics* Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1988), pp.470-85.

distinct islands with no communication between them (statements of natural science, of philosophy, of mathematics, of religion).[31]

This indicates how far Dummett has misunderstood Wittgenstein's philosophy. In Wittgenstein's discussion of Cantor he does not "interfere with the mathematicians" if, by interference, we mean taking them to task for their *mathematics* . However, in Wittgenstein's discussion of Cantor what Wittgenstein is doing is taking Cantor to task for his *philosophical* interpretation of his transfinite number theory.[32] Every time Wittgenstein seems to be interfering with any domain of inquiry the question must be asked: is Wittgenstein taking issue with the actual content of that domain, or is he leveling deep criticism of what he takes to be the metaphysics which is produced by this domain? The same question applies to Gödel. Once you demonstrate that a scepticism which informs a theorem is "not irrefutable, but obviously nonsensical [since] it tries to raise doubts where no questions can be asked" (*Tractatus* 6.51), then you are left with a piece of mathematics (the *proof* which Gödel produced) which can then be elucidated. For Wittgenstein "we must consider both the philosophical basis of Hilbert's problem and the mathematical content of Gödel's solution. For the fact that Hilbert's problem can only be resolved philosophically does not in the least entail that Gödel's proof is flawed."[33] Shanker thinks that Wittgenstein can by-pass the proof because the proof *qua* proof is not the problem. The sceptical framework in which the proof is interpreted is the problem. Therefore, that Dummett discusses the

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[31] Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp.167-68.

[32] "The dangerious, deceptive thing about the idea: 'The real numbers cannot be arranged in a series', or again 'The set...is not denumerable' is that it makes the determination of a concept - concept formation - look like a fact of nature...Our suspicion ought always to be aroused when a proof proves more than its means allow it. Something of this sort might be called 'a puffed-up proof'." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* Revised Edition (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1994), II.19,21.

[33] Stuart Shanker, 'Wittgenstein's Remarks on the Significance of Gödel's Theorem' in Stuart Shanker (ed), *Gödel's Theorem in Focus* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p.183.

epistemological significance of Gödel's proof indicates that he has misunderstood the basis for Wittgenstein's critical remarks on the foundations dispute. Unlike Dummett's interpretation, Wittgenstein's remarks on the foundations dispute were intended to resolve the dispute by dissolving the epistemological premises which produced it.

In the same way Wittgenstein's remarks in *Philosophical Investigations* can be interpreted as resolving the contemporary dispute over which theory of meaning is correct by dissolving the premises which produce it. In Dummett's case these premises are epistemological (a theory of meaning as a theory of understanding), and interpretative (Wittgenstein's as a full-blooded conventionalist). If Dummett cannot overcome these two problems, then Dummett's problematic theory can rightly be seen as a *reductio ad absurdum* of his interpretation of Wittgenstein.

One interesting way of showing whether Dummett has interpreted Wittgenstein correctly is to compare their own understanding of Brouwer's intuitionism. For Dummett is of the opinion that the intuitionist system created by Brouwer survives today as the only viable philosophy of mathematics. In *Elements of Intuitionism* [34] Dummett cites Russell's discovery of the set-theoretic paradoxes and Gödel's second incompleteness theorem as reasons why the mathematical programmes of logicism and formalism are incapable of fulfillment, and why, therefore, they are inadequate as philosophies of mathematics. This assumes, however, that Wittgenstein's general hostility toward intuitionism is mistaken.[35] Such an investigation would not only clarify whether Dummett is right to think that intuitionism survives today as the only viable philosophy of mathematics, but also whether Dummett's own worthwhile contribution to analytical philosophy represents a false start. Irrespective of what the outcome of this investigation might

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[34] Michael Dummett, *Elements of Intuitionism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp.1-8.
[35] Cf., Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1976), p.237.

produce, one of the valuable aspects of Dummett's entire philosophical contribution is his attempt to understand and appropriate that figure of the modern era overshadowing all others.

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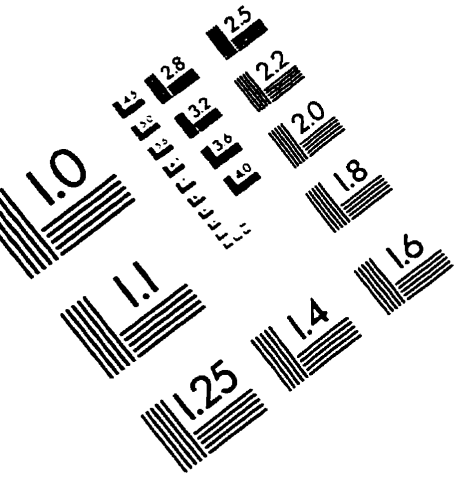
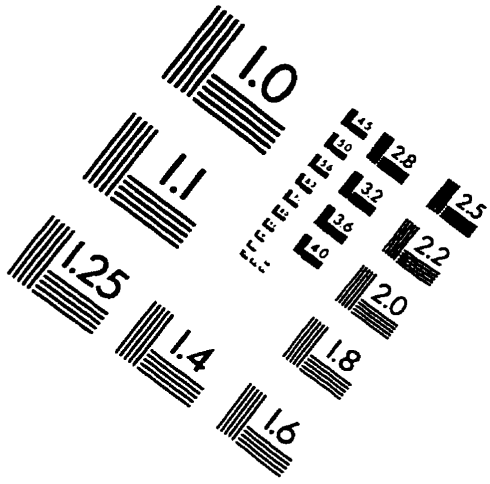
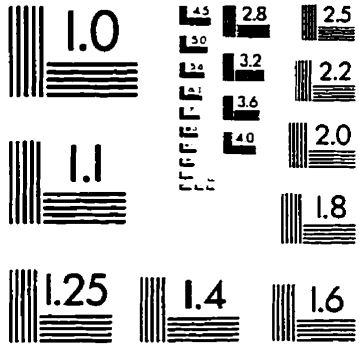
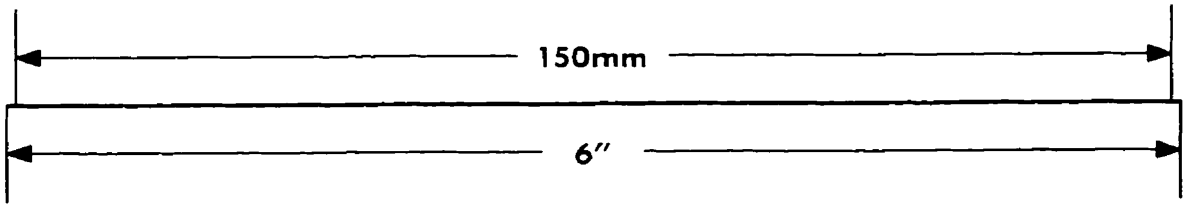
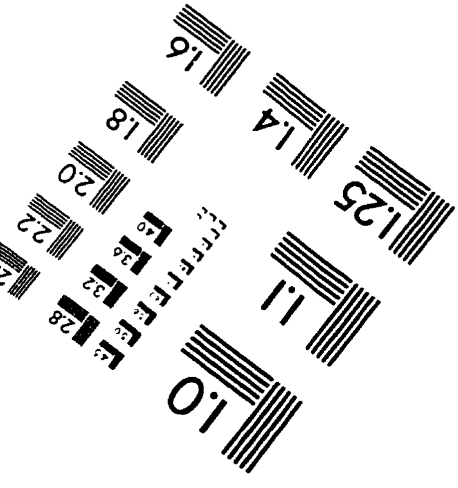
IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

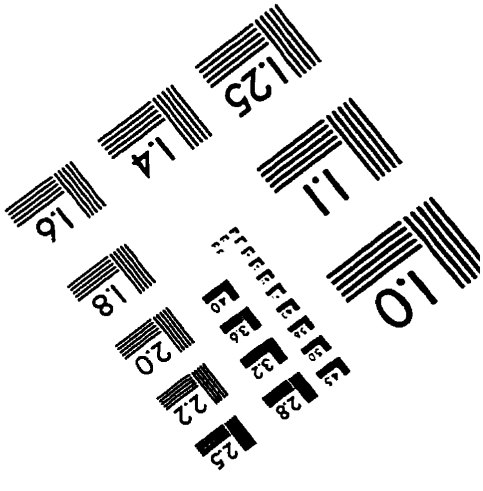












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